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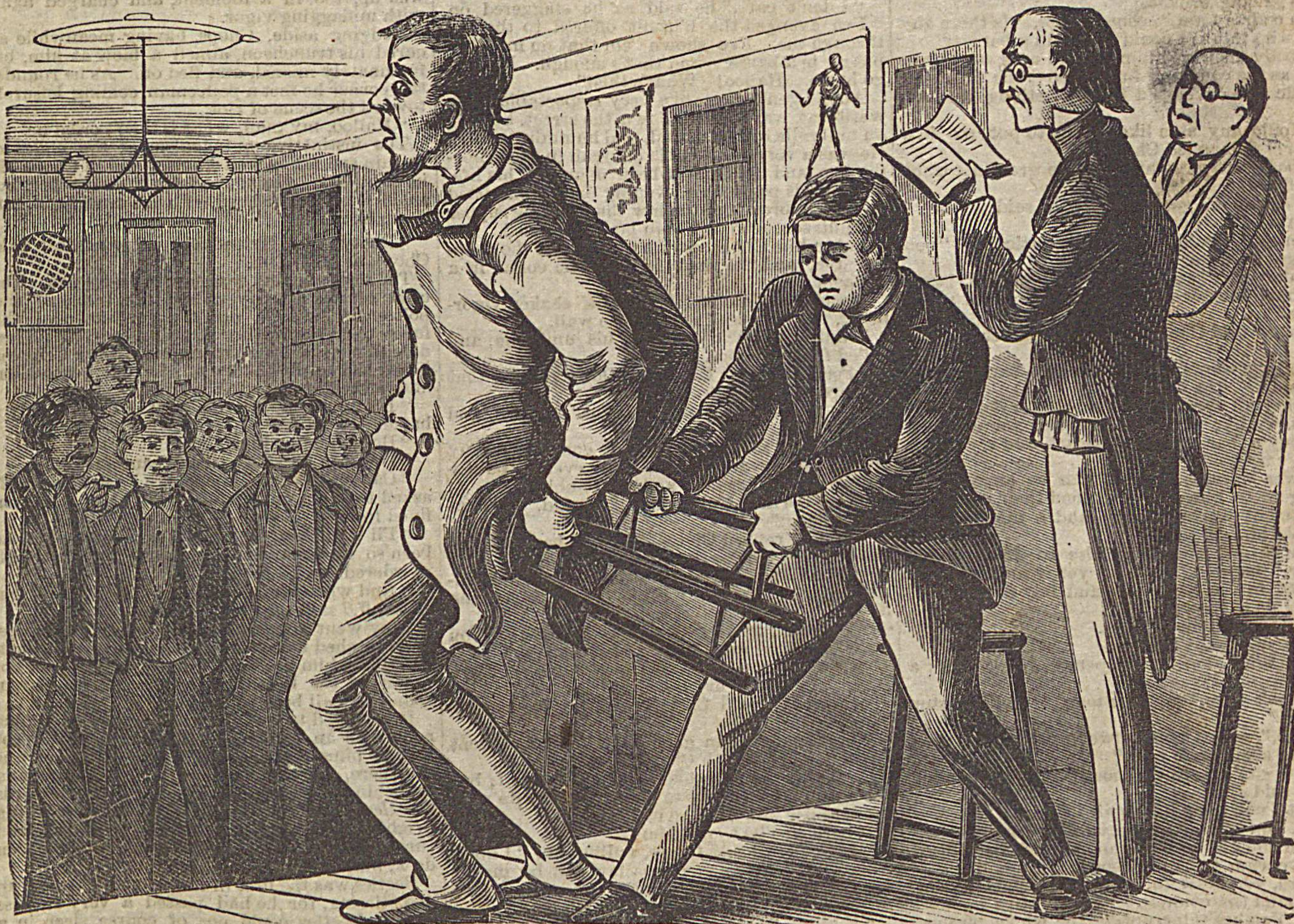
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THE HEART OF OAK.

(Continued from Wide Awake Library, No. 309.)



"One morning a bottle of gum was spilled over my stool, and when I sought to rise, I found myself stuck fast."

CHAPTER I.

CHOPS EXERTS HIMSELF.

WE finished the last volume with a question from Captain Timber, which we will now proceed to answer.

Chops had been left in a very trying position—few men in his place would have kept their serenity under the circumstances—and he was in a state of mind that made his trial doubly and trebly irritating.

He sat in that barrow with his eyes on the bulldog, and the brute sat with his eyes on him for the same space of time. Chops dared not

move and Tiger would not—the dog calmly and contentedly performing its office, and Chops collecting the fires of indignation within his heart.

At last Jim Crippler came to release him. Opening the door, he signalled to Tiger that his task was done, and beckoned to Chops to arise. Chops got slowly upon his feet, and backed to the door, with his eye on Tiger, and holding his breath until he got outside, when he breathed like a man relieved from hanging, and recovered his dignity.

"I hope," said Jim, "that you'll bear me no malice—it was done to oblige the gents, and there ain't no real vice in Tiger."

"There was something in his h'eye that I didn't

like," replied Chops, "but if you had knowed the man you made sit on a barrer all this time, you wouldn't ha' done it."

"I'm sure I wouldn't," replied Jim, soothingly.

"And that dog o' your'n would ha' slunk into a corner if he had knowed."

"Tiger ain't given to slinking," said Jim, "as he's a bold and forrard dog, and there ain't many things that he don't know. But if he'd seen you in airy life he might ha' behaved better."

All this was very civil of Jim, and Chops felt that he had been misled. A noble, generous feeling came over him, and he forgave the night's injuries.

"Which we will wash down the 'ole thing with something hot," he said.

They adjourned to the bar, and Jim capped his kindness by standing the drinks. Chops warmed up under a compound of old Jamaica, sugar and hot water, and came out strong in his usual style.

The bar was full of the "fancy," and they were rather astonished at the get-up and talk of Chops, but Jim passed word around that he was only a harmless lunatic, and they let him be.

"There ain't many men like me," said Chops, stirring up his liquor; "if there was, we shouldn't have inoffensive parties flopped into a barrer, and dogs with devil jaws set to keep 'em there. If there were more men like me they wouldn't stand it—they couldn't stand it."

"Don't take the barrer to heart," said Jim; "it was more a joke than otherwise."

"Men like me don't give jokes, and they don't take 'em," replied Chops. "The law ain't no joke, and never will be one. Give me some more rum."

Jim smiled good-naturedly, and mixed him another glass. Chops stirred it, fiercely frowning, and, after a liberal sip, returned to the original subject.

"You may put some men in barrers," he said, "and they rather like it; and you may watch some men with bull-dogs that have got the head of the devil himself, but there are some men that you can't do it with,"—here he drank up his rum, put down the glass, and, smiting himself fiercely on the breast, added—"and I'm one on 'em."

"In course you are," said Jim, taking his glass from the counter, as there seemed a likelihood of its getting broken.

"In course I am," echoed Chops. "Is there any man who thinks I could be put in a barrer?"

Nobody answered him, but all eyes were upon him, as the company fancied that the harmless lunatic had developed into something troublesome.

"Would any man like to try to put me in a barrer?" demanded Chops.

Nobody answered him, and he grew arrogant and offensive.

"Will anyone get a barrer?" he said.

Again no answer.

"Perhaps," said Chops, sarcastically, "you ain't got a barrer among you?"

"I dare say," said a man close to him, "that we could muster the wally o' one from somewhere."

"Then," said Chops, "get your barrer and put me in it."

"Nobody wants to put you in a barrer," was the reply. "Go home."

"Bring all yer barrers and all yer dogs," said Chops, wildly; "or, if you haven't got none, go and buy a barrer and dog-cart, and try to put me in 'em."

It was unreasonable of him to expect that strangers to him would expend their money to experimentalize upon him, and a man in a fur cap told him so.

"We've got something else to do with our money," he said, "but if yer wants ter get chucked into a barrer, go and buy one yerself, and I'll do it for yer."

"You?" exclaimed Chops.

"Yes, me!" said the man.

"Let him alone," whispered Jim. "He's a werry 'armless lunatic."

"I don't care," said the man. "Let him stop his jaw."

"Here," said Chops, "we'll argue this out. Give me some more rum."

"You can't have no more. It's past serving time," said Jim.

"But I will have it!" replied Chops.

"No, you won't," answered Jim, coolly.

"You don't know the man that you've refused to serve rum to," said Chops; "if you did—"

"Here, you must go!" said Jim Crippler, coming around the counter. "I can't have no more of it. You are interrupting the whole business of the house."

"Hands off!" cried Chops, but the next moment he found himself sitting in the middle of the road, with a general sensation of having been shot out of a gun upon him. The street was quite clear of wayfarers, for rain was beginning to fall, and dark clouds covered the sky. Chops looked up and down, endeavoring to collect his scattered senses.

"Wot is this?" he murmured. "Where am I? I was somewhere else just this minute; but where was it? I must have been taken faint, and—there's a public house. I'll go and have a reviver."

As it was the Nobbly Arms, he had no sooner put his head in than he was, to his amazement, shot out again—this time right across the street,

up against the shutters of a closed barber's shop.

"What a strordinary thing," he said; "wot's the matter with me. Am I a-dreaming?"

He took his hat off, and rubbed his head, a proceeding which cleared his brain a little, and a clear remembrance of the events of the evening came back to him.

"There was a barrer," he said, "and I think I was almost in it; there was a dog, and he looked at me. Ha—the law has been insulted through its official, and somebody must be locked up."

There was nobody in the street to lock up, and as he glanced up and down his eyes fell upon the barber's pole sticking out from the door in a very officious manner. The sight of it brought a very happy thought to his mind.

"That 'ud be the wepping to awe 'em," he said; "with that I should like to see a army try to put me in a barrer."

He took hold of it and gave it a wrench; the barber was a very confiding man, and nicely fixed his pole in a socket—it came out, and Chops was armed with a weapon well calculated to awe the public mind.

The various members of the party drinking in the bar were shortly after astonished by the door being thrust open, and a long red and white pole suddenly charging into their midst—one man stopped it with his stomach, and curled up on the floor in untold agonies.

"It's that blessed lunatic," cried Jim Crippler, and he was over the bar in a moment. Chops gave him one over the head with his weapon, and then it was wrenched from him. A brief struggle, and Chops was again in the street, leaving the pole behind him.

"I don't care," he said, as he staggered on, "I've avenged the h'insult offered to the law through me. I've shown 'em that no man can put me in a barrer—and that's enough. Now I'll go home. Halloo! What's this?"

An old gentleman, in a very respectable white waistcoat, was coming down the street, holding an umbrella over his head, and humming a tune. He was a very respectable old man in the tailoring line, and had never been drunk in his life, and on this particular evening had committed no greater breach of the law than having supper with his son, who had been lately married.

But in him Chops saw an offender of the deepest dye, and he had him by the collar in a moment.

The old gentleman felt himself shaken vigorously, then bounced against the wall.

Wildly he struck out with his umbrella, and called for the police.

"Perlice!" cried Chops. "Don't you see that you are in the hands on 'em?"

The old man looked at Chops' buttons, and turned faint.

He had no idea that he had committed any crime; but it was a serious thing even to be suspected by a policeman, and he trembled.

"This is a dreadful mistake," he said. "What have I done?"

"Done!" replied Chops, "you've been out and got drunk. You're disorderly."

"Drunk and disorderly?" repeated the old gentleman, astonished. "Why, I'm merely going home."

"You can't go home," returned Chops. "You must be locked up. Don't resist the law."

"I won't," replied the old gentleman. "Here I am; lock me up at your peril!"

"Come on," said Chops, "and let me charge you."

The old gentleman gave himself up, and went down the street with Chops quietly enough.

Chops felt that he had asserted himself; but the only difficulty was to know what to do with his prisoner now that he had him.

Where was he to put him?

"Look here," said Chops, pulling up, "I don't want to be hard on you—the law can be merciful now and then. What will you give me to let you go?"

"Nothing," replied the old gentleman.

"Nothing," said Chops; "well, I like that; do you think that I am going to bring you all the way down the street without being paid for it? If you knew the man I am, you wouldn't talk like that."

"I have been grossly outraged," said the old gentleman, boiling with rage; "the liberty of the British subject has been ignored."

"The liberty of the British subject," said Chops, "is to obey the law."

"I do obey it," replied the injured man, gnashing his teeth; "I pay rates and taxes, I am charged for police and street lighting, and I never grumble."

"It would be all the worse for you if you did," said Chops.

"Would it?"

"Yes, it would, but there, I can't argue with you. If you won't pay up for the trouble I've taken like a man, be off."

"I won't be off," said the old gentleman, madened with his wrongs. "I'll be taken before your principals, and let them know how infamously the liberty of the British subject has been outraged!"

"My principals!" said Chops. "Where will you find them? I ain't got none. I'm the principal—I'm the head of the ole biling lot that represent the law."

"I don't believe you are," replied the old gentleman, "and I don't believe that you are a policeman at all. You are some rascally loafer masquerading, and I'll have you up for it. Help! Police—police!"

He threw himself upon Chops, who staggered and fell underneath. The pair lay on the ground struggling, the old gentleman continuing to call loudly for the police.

"Why did I part with that pole?" groaned Chops, "and oh! that I could get at my regular weeping! Get h'off, and get up, you old idiot, and don't trample on the law in this way."

"I'll trample you to death," was the furious reply; "I'll kill you outright, you villain! I'll teach you to attack a rate-payin peaceful citizen. Help! Police—police!"

"They are a-coming," thought Chops. "I hears the tramp of a brother h'officer in my ears. Get up, you inconsistent old ratepayer."

Chops struggled violently, and upsetting the aged but gallant citizen, got upon his feet. The old gentleman, who had been rolled into the mud, was up, too, in a moment, and charged again with unflagging vigor.

Dodging aside, Chops, having meanwhile secured his truncheon, aimed a blow at him, but fortunately missed, and fled on. As he rounded the corner he met a policeman coming leisurely toward the scene of riot.

"Halloo, my man, what is this?" cried he.

The instinctive antagonism of the males of certain species is well known, and in Chops the instinct lay. He answered not his brother, but smote him on the head with his truncheon, and down he went.

"Dooty fust, friendship afterwards," said Chops, as he fled on.

The street behind was now in an uproar. The cries of the ratepayer, and the rattle of the policeman brought out the gentlemen of the fancy from the Nobbly Arms, and several policemen also were drawn to the spot. Jim Crippler heard the excited story of the old gentleman, and pushed his way to the front.

"It's all right," he said. "The chap is only a harmless lunatic."

"Do you know him?"

"I've seen him," was Jim's cautious reply.

"Can anybody tell me where I can find him?" asked the old gentleman. "I'll have him confined for life. I will—"

"I'll run him in," said the bobby who had been so unceremoniously floored. "He's half murdered me."

"And while we are talking here he will get clear off," said the old gentleman.

They went in pursuit of the offending Chops, and searched many a street and many a court, and found him not, for meanwhile Chops had got down to the beach, and after a little search, found a small boat with oars in it.

It belonged to a yacht whose owner had come ashore for an hour or two, but Chops did not trouble himself about that. Captain Timber was not there, and he must get aboard somehow, and launching her, he jumped in, and pulled towards the *Heart of Oak*, whose lights were burning brightly. He reached her unperceived, and turning the boat adrift, he crept softly up on deck, and stole to his hammock.

Beetles was the first in the morning to be up and stirring, for he had passed a very restless night. Beetles could not, of course, sleep in a hammock, as the getting in and out would be a very hazardous business at least; but he had a bunk, into which he could roll when he wished to rest, and out of which he often rolled in the middle of the night, to his utter wrath and disgust.

Once out of his bunk, and on his back on the floor, it was a matter of minutes, and not moments, before he could get in again, and the way he hooked into the bedclothes was terribly destructive to them. His sheets were full of holes, and his mattress, on what may be called the "out" side, looked as if five hundred wildcats had been clawing at it for a month.

On this night Beetles had been more than usually restless, and in consequence, he unexpectedly left his bunk half a dozen times at least, and the

language that the old man used was a disgrace to his grey hairs.

His nerves were so shaken that when morning came, he was wrong altogether in his bearings, and when he went out on deck for a little fresh air, and attempted to sit down on a pile of rope, he came down a flopper quite two feet away from the object he aimed at.

But he got up and went at it again. This time he came within a foot, and merely swore one string of oaths before he got up. At the third attempt he secured his seat, or rather, over-secured it, for he went clean over the other side, and lay on his back, with his two wooden legs in the air.

"Bless my arms and legs!" he growled. "Bless my eyes, here's a go! Beetles upside down—Beetles on his back! Bless everything and everybody! Oh, bless my eyes!"

He lay there fully an hour, too savage to get up, and there Job and Jake, coming out to have a little play before Mrs. Brown got up, found him.

"Hullo! golly, here am a lark!" cried Job. "See dat, Jake?"

"Bear a hand, lads—bless you?" said Beetles.

"Hear dat, Jake?—beary hand."

"Hab a lark fust, Job."

"Hab a dance around him, Jake."

CHAPTER II.

BLESSED NIGGERS.

"DAT de game. Here we go, wif a one—two—tree, floppity flop. Here am a lark. Dat de step, Job. Toes a lilly more out, and de elbys up and down."

"Oh, bless you for a pair o' niggers!" gasped Beetles, who was, of course, blessing them upside down. "If I could only hook on to yer—"

They came within a few inches of his reach, and danced with demoniacal delight; they performed frantic circles around his head; they backed over his wooden legs, but the helping hand he asked for, they would not give.

"If I could only hook you in some wital part," gasped Beetles, "if I could only ketch 'old o' you somewhere—"

"Ah, dat not to be done, Massa Beetles," said Job. "Now, Jake, keep de pot a b'ilin'."

"Him b'ilin' bery fast," said Jake, cutting such capers as none but a devil or a nigger is capable of performing. "Oh, here we go."

"Massa Beetles on him back, He swar until him face am bery black, Hey! hi! ho!—golly!"

"Dat de song!" cried Job, and they sang it together, and Beetles, in his dark wrath, swore a bitter chorus.

It was not often these two little niggers could vent their animal spirits without fear of interruption, and like those who gained unwonted liberty, they rushed into excess.

They fairly goaded Beetles into a frenzy.

He had lost his crutches in his third fall, and they were out of his reach. Nor was there on that side of the coil of rope anything for him to cling to. He was utterly helpless.

"If I could only hook on to one on 'em," he muttered, as he vainly endeavored to carry out his desire, "I'd make 'em sing another song."

"Massa Beetles on de deck, Him bery sabage I now spect,"

sang Job, and off went the two boys again, singing this second rhyming effort until Beetles began to swell visibly with passion.

But an avenger was near in the form of Chops, who, on waking, heard the noise on deck, and recognized the voice of Beetles in a rage. As he had slept in his uniform his toilet did not detain him a moment, and, opening the door of his cabin, he peeped out.

His official eye took in the whole scene at a glance, and his friendly eye recognized that the moment to be reconciled to Beetles had come.

Chops wanted friends, and he was wise enough to know that Beetles could be a good friend to him if he liked. He and Beetles had quarreled, but here was a chance of healing the breach, and he determined to seize upon it.

The intentions of Beetles with regard to his tormentors were unmistakable. What he desired to do to them was expressed in language too forcible to be misunderstood. That he could not personally carry out his wishes was also apparent, and Chops saw that now was the time to act like a man and a brother.

"I'll have them niggers in the lock-up," he muttered.

A good idea, and, like so many good ideas, only required to be carried out. But first catch your niggers, then imprison them. That was needful.

What experience of thief-catching and nigger-hunting Chops had had we will not pretend to say; but, in justice to him, we must declare that on this occasion he betrayed an amount of skill and caution seldom exercised by any man in or out of the force.

First he buttoned his coat.

Then he fixed his hat tightly over his eyes.

Then he rolled up his cuffs, and, having assured himself of the safety of his truncheon, stole softly forth upon the war trail.

Neither tormentors nor tormented perceived him. Beetles had long lost the power of distinguishing objects around him, having arrived at that state of fury when all things become mingled, and Job and Jake were too intent upon their singing and dancing, and watching the movements of Beetles' hooks, to heed anything else.

"Massa Beetles black and blue.

Ah, Jake he bery much like to murder you."

sang Job, and Jake took up the sweet refrain.

"Bless my wooden legs!" gasped Beetles. "May my iron arms be blown up! Let me get at 'em."

"Oh, Beetles, friend of my h'art," thought Chops, "I'm a comin'."

Stealthily as an Indian upon a sleeping foe he crept towards those innocent lads at play.

"Oh, Massa Beetles, what for you swar— You make my wool bery straight ha'r!"

"Look out, Jake."

It was too late. Chops had them in his power. In either hand he held a little nigger by the hair of the head, and a hundred parrots are small beer to the squealing they made.

"Ha-ha! My hour have come!" cried Chops. "Beetles, behold."

Beetles beheld and look up. Chops suddenly gave a start, and rubbed one shin against the other. Job and Jake left off squealing.

"Dat de sort, Jake," said Job. "You gib it to him on one ob him shins, and I take de oder. Oh, dat de sort."

"You little brutes," said Chops, as both niggers assailed his manly limbs. "You little woolly-headed demons—leave off!"

"Let us go den, massa," said Jake.

"I'll run you in!" gasped Chops. "Beetles, I bear this for thee."

"It's manly of you, Chops," replied Beetles, quite overcome with this touching instance of devotion. "Lock 'em up and lick 'em."

"I'm a goin' to," said Chops, tugging frantically at the niggers' wool.

"I'll enforce the law as soon as they—oh, you beggarly little brutes! Kick one of my size on the shinning—I mean shins you are skinning—if you did you dussent do it!"

"Hear dat, Jake?" said Job. "Let him leab us alone den."

"Pile on de shiners," gasped Jake. "Gib him reg'lar oners."

"This is simply brutal," said Chops, with tears in his eyes. "I wouldn't abear this for any man but Beetles."

"It's manly of you," said Beetles, in a deep voice. "I respects you, Chops."

That was something, but kind words are very poor plaster for sore shins, and Chops groaned within himself. Vainly did he endeavor to drag them to the lockup; they wriggled, kicked, and scratched. He had much better have tried to get two live eels into a pickle bottle.

But, bad as things were, more remained behind. The boys below were stirring, and Ned Bowling, having discovered what was going on between Chops and his prisoners, ran from dormitory to dormitory, and spread the glad tidings.

With magical celerity clothes were hurried on, and a troop of boys rushed to the rescue of Job and Jake. Chops saw them coming, and his heart sank within him.

"Hold on, Chops!" roared Beetles. "Be manly."

"I warn you all," cried Chops, as the boys gathered around him, "that it's unlawful to obstruct a officer in the execution of his duty. Lay a finger on me and you'll repent it!"

"Let those boys go," said Harry Fitzroy; "drop them at once."

"Havin' once arrested 'em it's my dooty to hold on," said Chops.

"Hear dat, Jake?" said Job. "Gib him another shinner."

"Dat so, Job," said Jake, and Chops howled with pain.

"Boys," cried Harry, struck with a sudden discovery, "Chops wants a washing—bring out the buckets. Fall in there. David, you take charge of the buckets, and pass on."

In a half a minute a dozen buckets of water

went over Chops, somebody knocked his hat off, and another put a bucket on his head. Job and Jake, drenched too, but not caring a fig for it, renewed their attack upon his shins, and, altogether, he had a terrible time of it.

"You wouldn't drown me if you knew the man I am!" he gasped.

"Avast there!" cried Beetles. "Let him alone. Stand to your colors, Chops."

"I can't!" gasped Chops, suddenly letting Job and Jake go, and staggering back. "It's more than mortal can bear. But I'll have vengeance! Let me find it."

He groped in his pocket and found it. He drew forth his truncheon, and rushed forward. A bucket of water smote him on the face, another went over his back, a third came from the side—it rained buckets of water. He could not see, but, wildly waving his truncheon, ran straight on, like a mad bull.

"Halloo! What's in the wind now?" cried Captain Timber, appearing at the door of his cabin.

Chops heard a voice, and knew it not. He dimly saw a horn, but whether man or boy he could not tell. He did not care which it was, it was enough for him that somebody was before him, and, striking out, he made the old captain see rockets.

CHAPTER III.

PAINLESS DENTISTRY.

CHOPS had no sooner dealt the blow than the truth flashed upon him that he had knocked down the one man in the world whom he most desired to leave alone.

He was bewildered—ruin stared him in the face—dismissed from the ship—poverty—misery—disgrace—uprose before him, and he clasped his hands in despair.

Still he was of an elastic nature, and he rapidly revived from the most depressed condition. The captain was writhing on the ground, holding his head in agony, and Chops threw himself beside him.

"My fri'nd and benefactor," he groaned, "is it thou that I have struck?"

"Go to—anywhere you like!" replied Captain Timber, struggling into a sitting position. "How dare you assault me?"

"I was driven stark, staring mad," replied Chops. "If I had known the man that was afore me I dussent ha' done it. I struck thee down in h'anger."

"Who are you calling thee?" asked Captain Timber, excessively irritated by this form of address.

"Thou," replied Chops.

Captain Timber opened his lips to speak, but words failed him.

"I've been bucketed and shinned, and bucketed again," continued Chops. "I ain't got a dry rag on me, and I'm half dead, and all in thy cause, my fri'nd and benefactor."

"Don't speak poetry to me," said Captain Timber.

"I won't," replied Chops, suddenly sinking to prose. "It's a jolly hard time I've had of it doing my dooty this morning. Ask Beetles."

Beetles was the only person besides themselves left on deck, and Beetles vigorously affirmed that Chops had acted "manly."

"Don't think much o' that tap he gave you," he said. "It was done in the melly, cap'en; and when there's a melly on, a fri'nd is just as likely to get one as a foe."

"That's true," said Captain Timber, who had been used to hard knocks all his life, and could easily put up with one extra.

"When I was down, and them blessed niggers was atrampling me to death, and goaded me into a frenzy, he stood by me. Chops was the man as come forrard, and fought against long odds for me. He acted manly," said Beetles.

"Which it were the work of my lifetime, and the h'object of my 'art so for to do," said Chops, with deep emotion.

"You ought to ha' looked afore you let out in that way," said Captain Timber.

"So I ought," said Chops, "and the next time I'll do so; but when the pot is biling you can't get cool in a moment."

"I suppose you can't," said Captain Timber; "but what's to be done? Things can't go on in this way. Discipline must be maintained."

"Leave it to me," replied Chops; "confusion may purvail for a time, but in the end the law must be triumphant. I shall be victorious."

"He will," said Beetles.

"Beetles knows me," continued Chops. "He knows that there have been clouds in my life-time, and dark clouds, a—a hovering—a hover-

ing kinder over me, and he knows that, like the morning sun enveloped in the mists of a rainy day, that I shall come out and shine like the stars over the boundless sea."

"Hear him!" said Beetles; "leave it to him, and he'll do it. I may make mistakes in the bearings of a cheer, but I can take the bearings of a man. Leave it to him, and he'll do it. Give him time."

"All I ax for," said Chops, "is time."

"And if he don't succeed," said Beetles, "chuck up the school."

"Never," cried Captain Timber, smiting his thigh as a butcher smites a steak; "I've entered on this ere venture and I'll go through it. I'll die afore I give in, and—"

"And I'll perish but I'll enforce the law," said Chops."

"Very well then," said Captain Timber, "I'll let you—at least, stand now for the present. But you had better dry your clothes. Get into your hammock, and I'll hang 'em out to dry."

Chops divested himself of his garments and got into his hammock as desired, and the captain slung a rope across the deck and left them. Then the bell was rung for morning exercises, and the boys came tumbling up on deck.

They expected a sound rating, but the captain said nothing beyond ordering them to fall in and march up and down. They saluted and obeyed, marching quietly to and fro until Mrs. Brown and the two niggers appeared with the day's rations.

Still the captain said nothing, and the food was served out with as much order and precision as could reasonably be expected when Job and Jake had a hand in it. Mrs. Brown had only five skirmishes with them, and the ration tray was only upset once.

After the serving out of the rations the portions of meat were put into nets to be boiled, and Mr. David Jones appeared. He had a swollen face, and was holding his jaw with his left hand, being an occasional sufferer from toothache.

"Ain't you well?" asked Captain Timber, eying him disdainfully.

"I have a toothache," replied the tutor, "and it occasionally troubles me."

"Have it out!"

"I was thinking of going ashore, sir, to see a dentist."

"A dentist be jiggered," said the captain. "I think they are the greatest humbugs out. They have all sorts of easy chairs to sit in, and instruments sufficient to pull a man's head off. It's all humbug—all you want is a pair of pincers and a handy wrist. Sit down, and I'll take it out for you."

"But, my dear sir!"

"Sit down," said the captain, imperiously, "and I'll soon get the pincers. A dentist!—what next, I wonder? Who ever heard of such a thing aboard ship? I've taken out dozens of teeth, and I'll soon perform on yourn. Sit on that bit of rope."

Mr. Jones sat down—he dared not disobey—and when the captain was gone he sat still, oblivious of the presence of his pupils.

"Oh, Matilda!" he gasped, "if you could only see your Davy now!"

Will it be credited that a roar of laughter followed this exclamation, wrung from his heart? Will it be believed that some of those around him capered with joy?

The captain was not long gone, and when he reappeared he had in his hand an iron tool, generally used to extract nails from deal boards, but certainly not adapted for tooth-drawing. It seemed, however, to be an old friend of his, for he looked at it with proud admiration, and held it out for the inspection of the wretched tutor.

"There," he said, "I've pulled out dozens with it, and when Bill Bowling wanted his out and the tooth proved to be a curly one, that went right around the jaws, I drew him twice up and down the ship afore he could get away. It's a beautiful instrument that."

"I really think my toothache's gone," said Mr. Jones, faintly; "indeed, I am sure of it."

"But it will come again," said Captain Timber. "I know it will, and I can't have chaps going about with their heads tied up, and groaning like a grampus with a harpoon in his back. Open your mouth."

"Indeed, sir—"

"Open your mouth, or I'll knock your head off," said the captain.

"If you think it wouldn't hurt me," groaned Mr. Jones.

"Hurt you, no—I'll lay hold and have him out afore you say Jack Robinson. I'm a neat hand at it."

"It's a large double tooth, and it's very far back, sir."

"That's nothing—open your mouth—which is it?"

Mr. Jones pointed to the tooth, and the captain thrust in the pincers.

"Is that the tooth?"

Mr. Jones nodded.

"Then here goes; and stand by like a man."

An awful yell escaped the tutor's lips as the captain, holding on like grim death, dragged him from his seat. He thought his head was coming off; but the next moment the pincers slipped, and the captain fell.

"I've got it! No, by jingo, I've missed it! Let me come again."

"I'll die first!" cried Mr. Jones, and, starting to his feet, he bolted below.

"He's white-livered," said the captain, addressing the boys, "and I allus thought so. If he'd given me another trial I'd have relieved him. But remember this, my lads—if any of you have the toothache, come to me, and I'll soon put you right."

"Thank you, sir," replied the boys in chorus; but each and all registered a vow in their hearts that they would suffer a hundred toothaches rather than reveal the pain of one to Captain Timber.

Mr. Jones was at his post in the school later on, and his face wore a smile; but it was the smile of a Spartan who had a hungry fox in his waistcoat and was desirous of concealing the fact from his family.

It was about noon when Chops awoke from a refreshing sleep, and, finding it so late, he got up, and went to the door for his uniform, which he concluded must be dry. One glance at the line, and a shriek of despair escaped his lips.

The uniform was gone!

CHAPTER IV.

LOST GARMENTS OF THE LAW.

"WHAT'S that hollerin' about?" asked Beetles.

"Beetles," replied Chops, "I've been robbed."

"Robbed?"

"Yes, of my uniform—of my insignia—of the garments of the law."

"Don't tell me that!" said Beetles, stumping forth in deep agitation. "Have they taken the coat?"

"Coat and t'other things, too. All I've got left is the hat."

"That's something," said Beetles.

"It ain't enough," replied Chops; "but I'll have 'em again. They'll find it's no joke to rob me."

"Go and lay it afore the cap'en," suggested Beetles.

It was laid before the captain, and he was very wroth, and ordered the whole school up on deck.

The boys fell in without a smiling face among them.

"Now, my lads," said the captain, "there's been a bad bit o' bis'ness done this morning—"

"A serious h'outrage," murmured Chops.

"And what I've got to say is this," continued the captain, "that the articles as you signed when you come aboard are being broke every hour, and that I won't stand it—I'll be hanged if I do!"

"You ought to be if you do," murmured Chops.

"Stand by," said the captain, looking at him angrily. "I can't keep on my course if you keep tacking in front o' me. My lads," he continued, turning to the boys, "something's been stolen aboard this ship this morning, and I want to know who's the thief?"

"That's it—who's the thief?" said Chops, who was standing close to the captain with a large piece of canvas wrapped around his manly body like a Roman toga.

"Now, boys, you that have stole 'em stand forward."

No answer, and nobody moved.

"Does anybody know anything about 'em?" asked the captain.

No answer.

"If you don't speak, I'll put some of you in irons."

"Begin with that chap, Fitzroy," suggested Chops. "Get out of my course!" roared the captain, giving him a push, and Chops staggered back against Beetles, who fell, of course, and, hooking on to the Roman toga, dragged it off Chops, and left him with no covering but a limited supply of linen. He bolted into the cabin, and closed the door.

"My lads," said the captain, "I'll give you a last chance. Who stole them clothes?"

Again no answer. Jerry Snivel alone showed

a desire to speak, but a look from David Crusher checked him.

"Get below—the lot of you!" roared the captain, and for a full half hour afterwards he walked up and down the decks in a towering passion.

Nothing was heard of the clothes that day, and Chops kept his cabin until the evening, when Captain Timber lent him an old suit to walk about in; but the next morning, when Mr. Jones got out of his hammock, he found his apparel gone, and the garments of the law in its place.

He knew not what to do, but, after debating with himself, he slipped them on, and went on deck, where he heard the captain bellowing from his cabin at the top of his voice, and Beetles and Chops roaring for somebody to come.

The cabin of Beetles was the first he entered, and there he found that worthy sitting up in the bed, using such powerful language that his very hair curled with horror.

"What is the matter, Mr. Beetles?" asked the tutor.

"Wot's the matter?" yelled Beetles. "Where's my breeches—where's my jacket and hat, and where's my crutches?"

"Really I don't know," replied Jones. "Have they been removed?"

"Can't you see that they have, you tallow dip? Don't you know that I can't get up, you yard-measure of a landsman? Oh, that I'd something to chuck at you!"

"Is anybody coming? Halloo!" roared Captain Timber, from his cabin; and his voice made the ship rock again.

"Coming, sir," said Mr. Jones, as he hurried in. "What is the matter?"

"Where's my clothes?" yelled the captain.

"Your clothes, sir? Are they gone?"

"Can't you see they are, you white-faced driveller? Can't you see that I've not got a scrap left? Look at my locker—ain't it empty?"

"It appears to be so," said the bewildered Jones.

"Appears! you—but, halloo! what have you got on?"

"All my clothes have disappeared, and these were put in their place."

"This is some deep-laid scheme," said the captain, "and, mind, if I find you in it, I'll chuck you overboard. Who's that hollerin' outside?"

"Beetles, sir."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's lost his clothes, too."

The captain used bad language, and then added:

"But there's another shouting. Who's that?"

"Chops, I think, sir."

"What is the matter with him?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Go and see, then, and don't stand staring at me like a blessed owl."

Jones turned and fled—for the furious captain was looking about as in search of a missile—and hurried out to the cabin of Chops.

He found that worthy standing in his limited linen, in a state of mind impossible to describe.

The garments lent him by the captain had been stolen in the night—the law had experienced a double outrage.

"I've been robbed again," he cried; and then he caught sight of the uniform which Mr. Jones wore, and ran at him full tilt.

"Them's my clothes," he said; "hand over!"

"I can't," cried the tutor; "I haven't anything else to wear."

"Mine they are, and I'll have 'em," said Chops. "You don't know the man I am, or you wouldn't get into my clothes. Give 'em up!"

"I won't!"

The tutor retreated to the deck, and the frantic Chops followed. Then commenced a chase long remembered by those who were on board the *Heart of Oak*.

It was strange, but nevertheless true, that no sooner was the chase begun than the deck seemed to be alive with boys, who, with loud shouts, urged on pursuer and pursued. The Game Bantam and the Turnham Ticker also appeared, and seated on a tub, watched the fun with great satisfaction.

The way that Mr. Jones twisted and turned, and dodged around the masts, tubs, or anything else which came in his way, won him unqualified applause; and the skill showed by Chops in cutting off the tutor in his flight excited the admiration of all beholders.

"Go in, Chops!"

"Bravo, Jones; well dodged!"

"Hurrah for the bobby!" were the cries.

At last Chops managed to grasp his man, and, closing with him, the pair went down heavily.

Then commenced a truly awful struggle. Chops seized hold of the bottoms of his nether garments, and endeavored to drag them off; but possession is nine points of the law, and the tutor, by merely hanging on to the top, frustrated the object of the man of law, though he was dragged all over the deck, and so bumped about that he felt he must shortly yield or die.

In the midst of this scene, Mrs. Brown appeared on deck, and she no sooner beheld Chops than she screamed and fled; but, in her blindness, she mistook her way, and ran across to the quarters of the captain.

Captain Timber, who had been listening to the commotion, and wondering what it was all about, at that moment came out to see. Mrs. Brown just looked at him, and, uttering another shriek of horror, veiled her eyes.

"Oh, you brutes—you wretches!" she gasped. "Can't be helped, ma'am," said the captain, retreating back, and speaking through a few inches of open door. "We've been robbed, and you shouldn't come humbugging about the deck at this hour of the morning."

"I—I came—to—to—find Job and Jake!" sobbed Mrs. Brown. "Oh, Captain Timber, what have you ever seen in my conduct to treat me this way?"

"Get off the deck!" roared the captain. "Go to your kitchen."

"I can't," sobbed Mrs. Brown. "There are two horrid wretches fighting close to the door."

"Get into a barrel, then," said the captain, "and keep there until I clear the deck."

Mrs. Brown was glad to get anywhere, and, as there happened to be one lying on its side like a dog kennel, she crept into it, and lay there shivering in her fright.

Captain Timber adopted Chops' expedient of the day before, and made a Roman toga of the Union Jack. Thus enveloped, he at least presented a decent appearance, and, arming himself with a rope, he rushed forth like a lion from its lair.

CHAPTER V.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THERE was no mistaking what the captain was bent upon; he was going to take a few shots at a venture, and let the first boy he got near have a taste of the rope; but boys are not so easily caught, and the pupils of the School on the Sea fled in all directions, diving down below as soon as they got a fair chance. In three minutes all had disappeared, and all that were left on deck were the five men.

Chops and Jones were still struggling, but victory was leaning to the side of Chops when Captain Timber stepped forward.

"Stand by," he said, giving Chops a push. "Avast! go easy."

"But ain't they mine?" demanded the excited Chops. "Ain't they the principal part of my uniform? and he didn't he steal 'em?"

"No, I didn't," gasped Jones; "my clothes were changed for them."

"I don't care, I'll have 'em."

"No, you won't, till I've found mine."

"Avast, I say," roared the captain, "clear the deck, go into my cabin, and I'll have a court-martial on this. Go past that 'ere barrel as quick as you can, for there's a lady in it."

Chops and Jones, glaring at each other like gladiators, hurried to the cabin, and Timber asked the Bantam and Tickler if they had a hand in it.

"No, master," they said, "we heard a bobbery, and came up to see what game was on."

"Then you can sit on the court-martial. Go into my cabin." Crossing the deck, Captain Timber advanced to the barrel, and stooping down, said:

"Mrs. Brown."

"Oh, go away!" cried Mrs. Brown, "this is brutal treatment of a lone woman."

"Mrs. Brown, don't you be a fool," said the captain; "you ain't got any need to fear. All I've got to say is that the deck's clear now, and that when I'm gone you may come out o' that barrel, and cut and run as soon as you like. Also, that I'll thank you to send Job and Jake to me."

"I'll do anything you like, only go away," sobbed Mrs. Brown.

"The woman is an ass, a lunatic," growled the captain, as he folded the Union Jack tighter around him, and retreated.

In the cabin he found the members of the court-martial, consisting of the tutor, Chops and the two prize-fighters. Beetles was left out, for although any of his friends would gladly have carried him into the captain's apartment, he was

in such a furious state of mind that it was dangerous to go near him.

Captain Timber took his seat at the head of the table, and declared the court open. Mr. Jones and Chops sat on his right, and the Bantam and Tickler took up positions on his left. Chops, it may be said, had provided himself with a toga, but his teeth were chattering with cold.

No president of a court-martial ever looked more solemn than the captain of the *Heart of Oak*, nor, indeed, did any official ever feel a deeper responsibility than he did.

Things had come to a serious pass when the clothes of the chief officers of the ship were stolen in the middle of the night, leaving them in a state fit for no society but that of utter barbarians, and he resolved to bring the culprits to justice.

"The first witnesses, gentlemen," he said, "are Job and Jake, and until they come I think that you had better turn this infamous outrage over in your minds, and see if you can fix on the parties that have been guilty of it."

"The boys, of course," said Chops, without taking the trouble to turn it over in his mind at all.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Jones.

"I don't believe they are in it," said the Bantam, solemnly.

"I'll take a taffy-davit that they ain't," added the Tickler.

The president made a note of these opinions, and when it was finished, a knock at the door, and a little additional blaspheming on the part of Beetles, announced the arrival of Job and Jake.

"Come in," said the captain.

The twins entered demurely, with their hands clasped before them, and simultaneously drew their right foot behind the left, and ducked their heads for a bow.

"Stand at the bottom of the table," said the captain, "answer such questions as are put to you, and don't tell no lies."

"Hear dat, Jake?" said Job; "de cap'en say dat you am to tell no lies."

"Nor you either," growled the captain; "and don't talk to each other, but address the court when you are spoken to."

"Hear dat, Jake?" said Job; "'dress de court."

The captain had nothing but his inkstand and pen handy, neither of which he could spare, or something would have been hurled at Job's head. The two little imps, with their chins just above the table, rolled their eyes about, and waited for the continuance of the proceedings.

The story of the missing clothes was briefly told them, and a question put, asking them if they had a hand in the theft, or knew of anybody who had.

"Hab you de lease idea, Jake?" asked Job.

"Debil a lilly bit, Job," replied Jake.

"Will you answer me?" roared the captain.

"Here, you, Job, what do you know about it?"

"Nuffin, massa."

"And you, Jake?"

"Not a lilly bit, massa."

"You did not take the clothes?"

"No, massa."

"Have you seen them anywhere?"

This question seemed to be a bit of a poser, for neither of the niggers answered. Captain Timber put the question again.

"Hab you seen dem, Jake?" asked Job.

"Answer me," roared the captain, throwing his quill pen at them, an impotent act that only made the little wretches grin.

"Give me that pen," said the captain.

"Take de cap'en him pen, Jake," said Job.

"Do dat yourself," replied Job; "de cap'en ax you."

"No de didn't."

"Yes—he did—ax de cap'en if he didn't."

The Tickler, seeing additional thunder on the brow of the president, picked up the pen and passed it back. The examination of the witnesses was then resumed.

"Job, listen to me—have you seen my clothes?"

"Yes, massa."

"Where?"

"On your back, yesserday; so did Jake," replied Job.

"I'll murder you if you don't answer me better. Have you seen them since?"

Another silence followed this question. Job and Jake rolled their eyes, and looked volumes at each other. The greatest dunderhead might have seen that they knew more than they were willing to tell.

"You have seen them!" thundered the captain.

"Tell me where?"

"Tell de cap'en where, Jake," murmured Job.

"No, you tell him, Job."

"Confound you for a pair of imps—tell me where."

Job collected himself for one grand effort, and then replied:

"In Missus Brown's room, massa."

"Where?" asked Captain Timber, rising in astonishment.

"In Missus Brown's room, massa, under de bed. Me and Jake was sweeping dere dis morning, and we hab a lilly peep under—den we see dem."

"Dat so," confirmed Jake.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Timber, resuming his seat, "this is astounding information!"

"It is really surprising," remarked Mr. Jones.

"It's inwallyble evidence," said Chops, "good, lawful evidence."

"A reg'lar winder!" murmured the Bantam, and the Tickler remarked, "that he had never heard such a nobbler in his life before."

"Now, my lads," said Captain Timber, "remember what you are saying. You are accusing a woman—a respectable female woman—of stealing a lot o' men's clothes, and a stowing them away under her bunk."

"Oh, no, massa," said Job, readily, "we not say dat she steal dem."

"What did you say, then?"

"Dat we see dem under her lilly bed—dat's all," said Job.

"Anyhow, if they are there, she put 'em there."

"Dey was dere a lilly while ago."

"You are sure?"

"Massa, me and Jake take a big oath to it."

A pause ensued, and the members of the court became reflective. The same question was uppermost in the minds of all—were they to prove or disprove this important evidence?

"Gentlemen," said the president, with a portentous face, "the case have took a sudden and unexpected turn. If what these boys say is true, and it mayn't be, for they are mighty liars—"

"Job," said Jake, "de cap'en say dat you am a liar."

"No, Jake, you am de liar. I hear de cap'en say so."

"Shut up, or I'll gag you!" roared the captain. "I never heard such little brutes in my life. Now, gentleman, we must confirm the evidence of these boys, and there's only one way to do it."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Go to Mrs. Brown and ask her permission to look under the bunk. Will you do it?"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the tutor, hastily.

"Will you, Chops?"

"Which I would go gladly," murmured Chops, "but for this costoom."

"You can have your own clothes," said Mr. Jones, graciously.

This kind offer was ignored, and Captain Timber put the same question to the Bantam, who offered a solution to the difficulty.

"Can't we all go?" he said.

"That's it," replied Captain Timber, rising, "all go. All Chops and myself have to do is to wrap up a little more, and come up behind. Then Mrs. Brown won't have any cause for complaint."

"That's it," said Chops; "wrap up well, and come up behind."

"Farrardness," said the Bantam, looking sarcastically at him, "ain't in your 'art when there's knocks or scratches afloat."

The procession was formed, the Bantam going in front, and as they passed through Beetles' cabin he poured upon them a string of left-handed compliments which drew from the Tickler the remark that "he was a werry peppery party, and ought to be wired down," an expression fully endorsed by the Bantam.

In single file they made their way to the private apartments of Mrs. Brown, and the Bantam knocked at the door.

"Who's there?" asked a shrill voice.

"All of us," replied the Bantam, in gruff tones.

"All of you?" cried Mrs. Brown. "What new outrage is this?"

"All we want is our clothes," bawled the captain from the rear.

"Yes, and I know to my shame and sorrow that you want 'em. Well, get 'em, and put 'em on."

"You've got 'em."

"Me—me! Oh! you wretch!"

"Yes, you have," roared the captain, "under your bunk."

"Where?"

"Under your bed."

A scuffling sound was heard inside, and then followed a scream.

"Oh! the wretches—the brutes!" sobbed Mrs. Brown within.

"Have the goodness, ma'am, to hand em' over," said the captain.

The door opened suddenly and three fair-sized bundles came flying out one after the other, and then came Beetles' crutches, one of which struck Chops most painfully on the shins. Having performed this duty, Mrs. Brown closed the door with a bang.

"Captain Timber!" she cried, "you are a low-born, base, unmanly villain!"

CHAPTER VI.

CHOPS TAKES A LESSON IN SPARRING.

CAPTAIN TIMBER was sorely troubled in his mind. It seemed to him most astounding and distressing that Mrs. Brown, of all people on board, should take to practical joking, and his reflections, as he paced the deck an hour later, took the following form:

"The boys, I knew, would be troublesome, but I trusted in Jones. Jones is as soft as a batter pudding, and I looked to Chops; then, having doubts of him, I ventured on the Bantam and Tickler. They've mutinied, and now that I am as good as alone in the world, that old woman, old enough to be a grandmother, takes to skylarking—bless her! What is it? What does it all mean? Is it in the air? Is it abroad? Have I bought a ship with a devil in the timbers? But I don't care. If it comes to working the whole thing alone I'll do it."

"You need never work alone while I'm aboard," said a soft voice in his ear.

He turned, and beheld Chops refitted out with his uniform, and his hat made quite brilliant with a brush and cold water. He had also his truncheon, and his hand rested gracefully on his hip.

"What can you do?" asked Captain Timber.

"Anything," replied Chops, "if you will only give me time, and don't interfere with the workings of the law. Remember what I did last night. I sent 'em all home."

"Well, so you did," said the captain, "but why didn't you come with them?"

"I was pressed into service ashore," replied Chops. "There was a lot o' malicious old villains, drunk as fiddlers, going about the street with barrers and bull dogs, and shovin' people into the barrers, and settin' the dogs at 'em, and the reg'lar perlice couldn't do anything with 'em, so they sent for me."

"And what did you do?" asked Captain Timber, keenly interested.

"I took the ringleader in charge," said Chops, "and after a deadly struggle with about 'arf the poperlation, I got him into the lock-up. Even then it took five men to hold him down."

"And you got him in alone?"

"I did, cap'en."

"And yet you don't look a very strong man."

"It's a knack," said Chops, "all knack. You don't know the knack I've got. If you only give me time, and don't interfere with me, that's all I ask—time, and no interference."

"I'm willing to give you a chance," returned Captain Timber, "but things can't go on in this way. This ain't a school on the sea—it's a devil's house."

"We'll have 'em under directly," said Chops.

"Leave it to me. It's no use rushing at the boys like a wild tiger. I've found that out. You must get at their young and tender hearts—make friends with 'em."

"Something in that."

"And I'm the man to do it. If you don't believe me, ask Beetles."

"I don't think it would be safe to ask Beetles a question to-day, but I think we may as well go and have a look at him. Anyhow, don't go within reach of his crutches, or you may get a something stiffer than you reckon on."

"I remember that crutch well," said Chops. "Beetles have got a knack of using 'em—I must say that. Did he ever catch you under the jaw with 'em?"

"There ain't a part on me that he ain't dug at one way or t'other," replied Captain Timber.

"At Peckham, when we got a-talking about old days, he used to flourish them sticks about more like a maniac than a man. But let us go and see him."

Beetles had got his crutches again, but he was still in his bunk, lying quietly, and apparently in a very good frame of mind; but there was something lurking in his eye which warned the captain to keep well out of reach, but Chops, in his confiding friendship, drew near.

"What, Beetles, my hearty friend," he said, "how goes it?"

Quick as lightning Beetles sprang up into a sitting position, raised one of his crutches, and gave Chops one on his pate, making it ring like a basin.

"Now," said Beetles, "I'm satisfied, and it's all right."

"But what's that for?" asked Chops, from the corner he had been knocked into.

"I told you, my lad, to keep clear till the steam was off," said the captain.

"What have I done?" asked Chops. "Does he know what he's done—hitting the law a crack on the skull like that?"

"Somebody took my crutches in the night," said Beetles, "and I was bound to take it out of somebody."

"But why take it out o' me?" asked Chops, softly. "It was not his game to quarrel with Beetles, and he was obliged to speak with a tongue of honey when his heart was gall."

"It don't matter much to me who it is," said Beetles. "Fust come fust served."

"I told you so," murmured the captain, "but you wouldn't keep clear."

"But let us h'arguey it out," said Chops; "let us look at the p'int in the case. Here's a man, rather short of arms and legs—"

"Who's short of h'arms and legs?" asked Beetles.

"Well, I won't call you short on 'em," returned Chops, "for far be it from me to tell a lie about a man as I calls my friend, but you ain't got so many as you had a few years ago. Here's a man, I say—"

"Where?" interposed Beetles.

"Let us for h'argueyment's sake, say that he's here," pursued Chops.

"Better avast, and let the man alone," put in the captain, gruffly.

"But the law's had a crack that come on it sudden, and wasn't its due in any way," insisted Chops, "and that crack was given by a man, as I've just said, that hasn't got so many legs as he used for to have. Not that it's a pint in the case—"

"Then why interdooced?" asked Beetles.

"What's my legs to you?"

"Nothin'," replied Chops. "Only when you gives the law a oner, and makes the law's head a mass of blue lights, you are bound to give a reason for it."

"My crutches was stole," said Beetles.

"Now we comes to the very grit of the case," said Chops, "and—"

"Better avast," whispered the captain.

"Can't you see Beetles' eyes?"

"I don't care for his h'eye," replied Chops, in a low tone.

"You'll get another, if it's a month to come. Avast, I say."

"Of course, cap'en, if you orders me I'll go."

"Leave Beetles and me together. I'll smooth him down."

"It's werry hard that the law should have such a rattling blow as that, and not to get a proper reason for it," muttered Chops, as he left the cabin. "Jigger his crutches, and jigger them as stole 'em! Jigger them as found 'em! Jigger everybody!"

Chops was very much aggravated, but he felt that he was powerless. Beetles was necessary to him, for if once he really lost the friendship of that exceedingly irritable mariner his dismissal was certain; but such cracks on the head as he got were very hard to bear.

He reached the deck; listening to the murmur of the voices of the boys learning their lessons below, and in that sound he recognized the tone of his enemies. Yes, it was the boys who were the cause of his sorrow and sufferings, and he hated them with his whole heart.

"It won't do," he said, "to quarrel with 'em, for they ain't got the least respect for a h'uniform, and there's such a swarm of 'em—active as wild cats and ten times as vicious. They are all around you in no time, and you are licked in a twinkling. How I hate 'em! I allus did hate boys. If I could only have 'em in the room one at a time—them with nothing and me with a stiffish little whip—ah!"

The very thought of this was delightful and soothing, and he dwelt upon it until the morning lessons were over and the boys came tumbling up for sparring, which had become their favorite exercise.

The Bantam and Tickler appeared at the same moment, and Chops, who had grave suspicions of practical joking, put his back against the mainmast, and drawing out his truncheon, toyed with it lightly as a gentle hint that he did not mean to stand any nonsense.

However, nobody took any notice of him. The Bantam and Tickler took their respective pupils in hand, and the sparring began.

The improvement in the boys was already marvelous. Harry Fitzroy was a quick mover, and he and David Crusher renewed the contest of the previous evening—the Bantam seconding Harry, and the Tickler supporting David.

As they struck, and parried, and dodged about, Chops grew interested, and a thought entered his mind that he could make sparring a means of securing the friendship of the boys. When the bout was over he ventured his applause.

"Bravo!" he cried; "encore—very good—mighty clever! Bravo!"

Nobody took any notice of him, so he advanced to the ring, and addressed himself to the Bantam.

"Good sport," he said. "Splendid exercise! I used to be very fond of it."

"Were you?" said the Bantam; "then have a little of it now. I daresay Master Harry will oblige you."

"With pleasure," returned Harry; "put up that truncheon and on with the gloves."

"It's 'ardly fair to have a go in at a boy," said Chops.

"All you've got to do is to play light," said Bantam. "Come on."

Chops wavered, but the question was soon settled by Beetles, who came out stumping and scowling, and having ascertained what was in the wind, bade him go on.

"And come here, Chops," said Beetles, "I want to whisper."

Chops drew near and bent his head to listen.

"Hit him vicious if you can," whispered Beetles. "But for them boys there wouldn't be all this misery aboard—no stolen crutches."

"Nor oners on the head of the law," put in Chops.

"No, nothing of that sort—nothing but wittles and drink, and peace."

"But won't there be a row if I hits vicious?" asked Chops.

"Say it was a h'accident," said Beetles; "do it, or I've done with you."

"Oh, Beetles," said Chops, sliding into poetry, "I could not part with thee."

"Master Harry," said the Bantam, who had been watching the pair keenly, "that Chops is a cur, and maybe he means mischief—I think he does—and if he lets out spiteful, you just give him one or two of them upper cuts I taught you."

"If he tries any tricks," said Harry, "I'll knock him into the middle of the next month and a week after. If I don't, may I be shot! Tie these gloves a little tighter. I mean business, Bantam."

"That's right, Master Harry, you give him something for a keepsake if you like. Upper cuts, remember."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT.

CHOPS might have been very fond of sparring in his youth, but he had forgotten all about it in his prime, for in point of attitude he was scarcely the equal of Mr. Jones, the tutor, who, with the captain, had now joined the spectators.

Beetles, who, after one failure, had succeeded in getting a seat upon a tub, was, however, in ecstasies, and, as Chops advanced to the fray, gave him every encouragement.

"Good again, Chops," he cried. "That's the way—let out at him. Look at that, cap'en."

"I sees him," said the captain, "but I don't think that his left arm is up enough."

If Chops had raised it another inch he would have shut out the view of his antagonist, but attitude in pugilism is, of course, a matter of opinion. The great thing is to go in and win, and Chops was resolved to do it.

He felt as some heroes feel when the eyes of the world are on them. Here was an opportunity for distinguishing himself before Beetles, the captain, and the whole school. Supposing he did so, what would be the result?

The admiration and respect of the captain and Beetles, and the awe of the boys, who really up to that time had shown great indifference to the presence of the law.

As he stood before Harry, he felt almost confident of victory. The only thing he did not like was the calm and confident expression of the boy's face, and the easy way he seemed to work his gloved hands.

"Remember that this is only in play," said Chops; "only taps, you know."

"So long as you tap I will tap," replied Harry, "and there's one to begin with."

Just on the nose of Chops it landed, and gave a little additional polish to its glowing tip.

Chops, in return, struck out with all his force, and hit—the empty air.

"I thought so," said the Bantam; "he's vicious, Master Harry."

"So I see," replied Harry.

"Take it out of him."

"If it's to be a real fight," said Chops, hastily, "I must withdraw at once. It's ag'in' the law for the law to break the law."

"Don't come any gammon," said Beetles, authoritatively; "you go on."

"Yes, go on," added Captain Timber; "don't funk for a boy."

"Really," said Mr. Jones, "he ought to go on. It's cowardly!"

"Arter this," replied the captain, "you and I will have another turn."

Mr. Jones did not reply, but his knees suddenly smote together, and with slow and fearful steps, he quietly skedaddled down stairs. He was enjoying the fight, but he would rather sacrifice anything than have another friendly bout of fisticuffs with the captain.

Chops would have given the world—if he had possessed it—to have got out of that little business. The more he saw of Harry's style the less he liked it, and now that the affair began to assume a serious aspect, he shivered, visibly.

A couple of blows, one after the other—one in the face, and the second on the side of the head—discomposed him yet further, and his style, hitherto merely primitive, became wild and frantic. He swung his arms about and struck blindly.

"At it, Chops," roared Beetles; "get him in chancery. He ain't in that direction—he's this way."

Chops had been receiving severe punishment, and furious under the smarting of a shower of blows, he turned around and rushed straight on. Harry dodged, and Beetles, receiving the blow intended for him, was sent flying over the barrel.

Unconscious of having knocked down his best friend, Chops tossed his arms aloft, and shrieked:

"The law is awenged."

Beetles, in a black rage, could not for a moment speak, but he was favored with a rapid recovery, and hooking on to the vessel's side, he raised himself to his feet, tucked his crutches under his arms, and bore down upon the elated Chops, who, while the others were limp with laughter, had taken up an attitude very little resembling Ajax defying the lightning.

"The law," he said again, "have been awenged. It may be weakened or perwented for a little while, but in the end it is prevalent."

Something smote him from behind, and he staggered forward; something else dug him in the small of the back, and he fell.

"You can't spar with sticks," he gasped; "be manly and fair."

"I fights with wotever comes handy," said Beetles, giving him another dig.

"Halloo! Beetles, what's this for?"

"You knocked me down."

"Oh, Beetles, was it, indeed, thou?" exclaimed Chops, who, in the time of trouble, had a go at poetry. "Did I really strike thee?"

"Atween the eyes," replied Beetles; "and if I had knowed you was comin' I'd ha' put my crutch through you."

"Come, Beetles," said Captain Timber, advancing, "no quarrelling among friends. He didn't mean it. Let him get up."

"That's all I want," said Chops. "Let me get up."

"And let us finish our little match," said Harry. "I'm ready."

"Well," said Chops, "I'd rather not arter that last little bus'ness. I might kill somebody. Beetles have had a merciful escape."

"Do you mean to say that you funk it?" said Captain Timber, wrathfully.

"Oh, no!" replied Chops. "If you knew me you wouldn't dream of accusing me of funk. Only my blood's up, and I'm afraid of killing the boy."

"Here: I like a man with his blood up," said Captain Timber. "Off with them gloves, Fitzroy, and put 'em on me."

Chops turned pale, but he dare make no demur. He was in for it now, for Beetles added his voice to the business.

"That's it, cap'en," he said, "put 'em on, and see what he's made of."

Need we relate what followed?

Captain Timber got on the gloves and went at his foe straight.

Chops fled.

Not away, as he intended, for those cruel boys made a ring he could not break, and he fled around and around until the captain got at him.

A blow made him stagger, and then Captain Timber got him in chancery, and his blood being up, he pommelled away until his nearest and dearest relation would have failed to recognize the official features of Chops.

The enthusiasm was terrible, and when, at last, Captain Timber ceased for want of breath, his loving pupils raised him on their shoulders, and bore him around the deck in triumph. When fairly tired they put him down.

"My lads," he said, with a face like a full moon, "I honor and thank you for your good feeling, but let me tell you this, that it ain't discipline for the crew to carry the captain about like a lord mayor or some beef-headed member of parliament, and discipline must be maintained."

All this time Chops had been forgotten, and Chops lay on his back staring at the sky, and trying to collect his scattered faculties. Beetles moved towards him, and gave him a friendly dig in the ribs.

"Get up," he said, "and at 'em again, Chops. Be manly."

"I have been hit by twenty people. I've been knocked down and trampled on," replied Chops, wildly. "The law has been assaulted with a battering ram."

"He's knocked clean out of time," said Bantam; "and the way the cap'en fibbed him when he got his 'ed in chancery was a credit to him."

"If he knew the man he battered—if he had the least idea of the party that he laid into that way, his heart would ha' bled afore he'd a done it," said Chops. "I've given half my life and time to his cause, and he might ha' been more narciful."

CHAPTER VIII.

BEETLES AND CHOPS HOLD A CONSUTATION.

It was nearly midnight, and Chops and Beetles sat in the cabin of the latter, with the door barricaded as if against the assault of some powerful enemy; and indeed, an enemy had been there—an enemy who only retires when worn out by repeated assaults.

And how came it about that Chops and Beetles had been thus assailed? In this way. Captain Timber, stimulated by his recent sparring successes, was desirous of knowing more of the art, and, at the instigation of Bantam and Tickler, had gone ashore to see a little fun at Jim Crippler's, thus leaving the ship entirely at the mercy of the boys.

But let us do the captain justice. He trusted Chops, and gave him leave to quell any disturbance in the best way he could, and failing that, to put down the name of such ringleaders as came under his ken.

"But perhaps they'll be quiet, for once," said the hopeful captain.

Bantam and Tickler also hoped they would, and on their way to the shore with Captain Timber cheered him up by giving vent to their belief that in his absence all would be well with the *Heart of Oak*.

Vain hope—unhappy belief!

The boat had scarcely reached the shore when the rebellion broke out. It began in the kitchen with Job and Jake, who declined to do some washing up which Mrs. Brown placed before them.

"It am de time to knock off work," said Job. "Massa gone ashore."

"To de feater," said Jake.

"What's that to you, little wretches?" cried Mrs. Brown.

"When massa at work all work," said Job. "When massa at play all go on de spree."

"Massa say de work am done, And all de niggers hab some fun."

"Do your washing up first," said Mrs. Brown, "then go and play."

"Hear dat, Jake?" said Job. "Missus say dat you do de washing up."

"What a big lie, Job! Missus say that you do it," returned Jake.

"I told you both," said Mrs. Brown.

"One am enuf, missus," said Job, as he slowly dipped a plate into the basin of water. "But dat just like nigger-dribing woman—nebber gib any lilly boy time to play, but made dem worky—worky, all de day."

Mrs. Brown aimed a blow at him, Job ducked and dropped the plate. Mrs. Brown made a second attempt to get at him, but he darted out of the door. Then she went at Jake, who, after running twice around the table, also succeeded in making his escape.

"I'll have no more of them," said Mrs. Brown,

as she savagely went to work upon the washing up.

"When Captain Timber comes back I'll tell him so. He must take care of them himself, and I'll have a respectable, well-conducted girl."

Job and Jake made straight for the dormitories, and rushed into No. 1, where they found Jimmy Bricks entertaining his friends with a musical performance.

"What's thiz all about?" asked Harry. "What do you little devils mean by coming into the room head first?"

"Oh, golly! such a lark, Massa Harry," said Jake. "De cap'en gone ashore, and nobody left but dat ole Beetles and Chops."

"Hurrah, boys," cried Harry. "The ship's ours for a time. What shall we do?"

"Barricade Jones in first," said Ned Bowling, "then arrest Chops."

"Done. That's the game. Pass the word to the other rooms, you niggers."

Away sped Job and Jake, and in two minutes the school mustered its whole force. Mr. Jones, who was writing to Matilda, hearing a row outside, put his head out, and somebody's knuckles rapped it so promptly that he took it in again and bolted his door.

"More riot—more disturbance," he said. "No authority—no government. One of these nights they will fire the ship, and then—oh, Matilda, I may perish in the flames; but e'en then my last thought will be of—what are they doing outside?"

He went to the keyhole and peeped through, but could see nothing more than that his precious pupils were engaged in knotting their handkerchiefs, and hurrahing with all their might.

The fact was, they had succeeded in capturing Chops and Beetles on deck. Chops gave in at once, and was led below. Beetles was merely carried to his bunk—using unadulterated ship language on the way—and laid in it face downwards. For Chops a more terrible punishment was reserved.

A more abject specimen of the force was never looked upon. He was so limp with fear that it was as much as he could do to stand. The rolling of his eyes and the expression of his face was pitiful to look upon.

The put him at one end of the passage, and forming two rows up to the ladder, took out their handkerchiefs and knotted them.

Chops looked at this proceeding with prophetic forebodings.

"Dear boys," he said, "what's all this for? What have I done to thee, thou little ones? I've got boys of my own, and for their sakes I ax you to let me go."

"Oh, yes," said Harry. "We'll let you go. Now, boys, are you ready?"

"Ready! Ay, ready!" they sang.

"Now, Chops," cried Harry, "run!"

"I can't," replied Chops, with a sickly smile. "I aint got over the brutal treatment of the cap'tain yet."

"Run—run!" they shouted.

"Give him a starting one, David," said Harry.

David Crusher went behind Chops and gave him one that made him step a yard. Nerving himself, he fled up the double row of boys, who rained a shower of blows upon him.

Panting, he reached the deck, and like a swarm of bees, they followed him. He darted into Beetles' cabin, and put his back against the door. Beetles was still lying on his face, not having succeeded yet in turning around.

"Bless my eyes and limbs!" he roared. "Who's that?"

"It's only me!" gasped Chops. "I come to purtect thee, Beetles, my friend."

"Turn me over, then!" roared Beetles.

"I'll come in a minute," said Chops. "Where is the bolt?"

"Broke," replied Beetles; "the boys bust it off. Come and turn me over."

"If I leave here we shall both be murdered. Can't you hear 'em? Here they come."

They came with a vengeance, rushing with such force that the door was knocked open, and Chops sent flying right on top of Beetles, who made several additions to ship language.

"They're coming!" gasped Chops. "Beetles, prepare to die!"

But not a boy entered, and after the door was opened, nothing for a few moments was heard but a scraping sound, as if something long was being drawn over the deck. Chops got up, turned Beetles over, and helped him to arise.

"They are funkng about coming in," Chops whispered, "arter all. They stand in awe of the law. In the long run they must obey it."

A hissing noise and a cheer, and something struck Chops in the face, and down he went, and

the next moment he found himself drenched to the skin.

"Beetles," he roared, "the ship's sinking!"
"It's the blessed fire-hose," gasped Beetles. "Stop it, you young demons!" and then came yet more additions to ship language.

Chops got up and tried to get at the door, but the remorseless hose was bent straight at him, and he sank under it. Then came a wild shriek of laughter, and all was still.

"Is it a reality or a dream?" muttered Chops, as he wiped his head with the tablecloth. "Are we in the land o' the living or among demons?"
"Get the door closed and barricade it," said Beetles.

Chops, fervently hoping that there would be no more hose-work, got up and walked backwards to the door. If there was any more water in store for him, it was better for him to have it in the back than front.

His hand was on the door; safety was at hand, when again came that hissing noise, and he was sent staggering back. Beetles, in a fury, seized his crutches and got up.

"I'll have the lives o' some o' 'em if I die for it!" he cried.

The moment he was up the hose stopped, and somebody outside cried: "Spare Beetles!" and then there was a rush, and again silence.

Beetles did not go outside, but hobbling to the door, he fixed his crutch against it, and bade Chops hold it.

"Pile everything blessed against it," he said; "make it hard and fast, and then get out the rum, and let us have a drain. Then sit down and have a talk. We must see what is to be done with 'em."

Chops obeyed. The door was made as fast as chests and chains could make it. They each had a stiff noggin of rum to keep the cold out, and then sat down on the bunk to consult.

"Look at this place," said Beetles, his eyes standing out of his head with fury, like a boiled lobster, "look at this bunk—not a dry rag on it! Look at you, and look at me, drenched to the very skin! Oh!—"

"Beetles," said Chops, clutching him in alarm, "don't give way to passion like that, or you'll bust a blood-vessel."

Beetles was, indeed, on a fair way to such a thing, but he came around shortly, and asked for a little more rum.

"It's no good a-grievin' over it," said Chops, "the thing's done."

"But look at this place," said Beetles. "Cast your blessed eyes on the floor, look at my Sunday coat, like a blessed rag that's been lying for a month in a blessed water-butt. Oh—oh!—"

"For goodness' sake, Beetles," said Chops, "don't bust while I'm here."

"Why don't you stop 'em, then?" asked Beetles.

"Ain't I doing all I can?" said Chops.

"Which ain't much."

"Now, do be reasonable, Beetles, as thou art my friend," pleaded Chops. "Can a man do everything at once? Can a law be carried into execution at a moment's notice? There's summonses, and hearings afore magistrates, and committals and trials even when you've got the 'ole force at your back, but here am I a lone officer, with everything to carry out myself, and it ain't reasonable to expect me to get order in a minute."

"I don't want to be 'ard on you, Chops," said Beetles, a little softened down. "I dare say you do your best, but do look at this blessed place."

"Shut your eyes, Beetles," suggested Chops; "don't think on it."

"Who's a-goin' to sleep on this 'ere bunk to-night?"

"Don't think on it till it's time to sleep, Beetles."

"And who's a-goin' to put on that Sunday coat again?"

"It's only Thursday now, and it'll be dry by the time you want it."

"But look at it!"

"Beetles," said Chops, "have a little more rum, and turn your thoughts another way. Think o' me."

"What's the good o' that? Who are you?"

"Think of something to be done to the boys," said Chops.

"I can think of a hundred things," replied Beetles. "Bite 'em, fry 'em, roast 'em, toast 'em, kill 'em, and the only thing is to get somebody to do it."

"Beetles, listen to me."

"Go on."

"Thou shalt have thy revenge."

"How?"

"I'll be in wait for lone boys, and fetch 'em crackers when they don't even reckon on any-

body being a-nigh them. I'll knock their heads in—I'll break their bones."

"Will you now?" asked Beetles, delighted.

"I will," replied Chops. "I'll avenge the law, and you at the same time."

"Let us drink to it," said Beetles.

Chops served out a liberal supply of liquor, and they both drank to the success of the new scheme for punishing the school in detail. So far all was well. It only remained for Chops to carry it out.

CHAPTER IX.

TREACHERY.

CHOPS and Beetles sat for an hour waiting for the renewal of hostilities from the enemy, but nothing was heard except a scream, which probably emanated from Mrs. Brown, and whether it did or not was a matter of indifference to the two friends.

"She can fight her battles, and we'll fight ours," said Chops.

"So be it," replied Beetles.

Shortly after, Chops looking out of the port-hole, announced that the rain was falling and wind getting up a bit. For the latter they had the confirmation of the increased motion of the ship.

"That's a good thing," said Beetles, "it'll keep 'em below."

"I wouldn't trust 'em," replied Chops. "When do you think the cap'en will be back?"

"Not to-night, if it's rough," returned Beetles.

"Then we'll keep the barricade up. Here they are again."

It was only somebody knocking quietly, but Chops was not to be taken in that way. He, however, asked who was there.

"Me, massa," replied the voice of Jake; "me and Job."

"What do you want?"

"Nuffin, massa, but Mrs. Brown want you berry bad."

"What's the matter with her?"

"Nuffin, massa—she want you to come and dry your clothes by de fire."

This was a delightfully tempting offer, and Chops felt his heart warm toward the woman who could be so kind. Among other weaknesses Chops fancied he was a bit of a favorite with the fair sex, and although Mrs. Brown had hitherto been somewhat cool to him, there was nothing marvelous in her relaxing now. It might be that his sufferings had touch her tenderly—indeed, it was undoubtedly so.

"Anybody with you?" asked Chops.

"Only Jake, massa."

"Where are all the boys—the pupils?"

"Down below, playing de game ob hunt-de-slipper," replied Jake.

If Jack had said that they were all in bed and asleep, Chops would have been suspicious; but the simple assertion that they were playing hunt-the-slipper had a ring of truth in it, and Chops, believing it, quietly took down the barricade, and opened the door.

There was light enough to see that the deck was clear of all but Job and Jake, and the spirits of Chops arose. There were worse things in the world than a warm fire and the society of Mrs. Brown—she was past her youth, was Mrs. Brown, and mightily bony, but she was still agreeable.

"Who's there?" asked Beetles, who had failed to grasp the conversation.

"The two niggers," said Chops. "They've come with a message to me from Mrs. Brown, who wishes me to go and dry myself at the kitchen fire."

"Didn't she ax me?"

"No, massa," replied Job; "only Massa Chops, and he was to come at once."

"It's mighty odd," growled Beetles. "Why should she ax you more than me?"

"Don't be hurt, Beetles," said Chops, softly. "You know I can't help it. In the old days at Peckham I was allus a favorite with fair woman. You remember that party as kept the fried fish shop—"

"No, I don't," said Beetles, surlily.

"What! not the woman that allus had a red shawl around her head, and had a husband far away off the Cape? Come, Beetles, you remember that?"

"I remembers a party as refoosed to let you have a fried sole without the money," said Beetles, "and I don't remember no other."

"Well, Beetles, you're forgetting that little venture of mine won't alter facts. But we won't harguey it. Am I to go at once, dear boys?"

"Yes, massa," said Job, "and you am to go in straight without knocking."

"I suppose she is sad and lonely," said Chops, getting pathetic.

"Yes, massa."

Mrs. Brown had, indeed, great cause for being sad, as she had also passed a terrible evening, owing to Job and Jake, who had devoted a little of their time for play, to darting every now and then into her cabin, and singing derisive rhymes at the top of their voices. They had even upset her in her chair with a sudden rush, which gave rise to the scream Chops and Beetles had heard.

As Chops crossed the deck, with the air of a gay gallant, Mrs. Brown was lying in wait behind the door with no less a weapon than a frying-pan in her lily-white hand—a weapon designed for the chastisement of Job and Jake.

Chops advanced to the door, humming a tune. He turned the handle, and went in boldly and joyfully, with the beginning of a neat and appropriate speech upon his lips—

"My dear Mrs. Brown, your kindness—"

He said no more, for the frying-pan struck him on the cheek, and, with illuminated eyes, he fell back. Mrs. Brown closed the door, and Job and Jake set up a wild dance, or rather wriggle of delight.

"Oh, Massa Chops, de pan came down wif a floss?" sung Job, and Jake took up the refrain, repeating it again and again as they capered about.

Any attempt to describe the wrath of Chops would fail. Let alone the aggravation of being the victim of a nigger's practical joke, he had been struck down in the very height of a tender emotion. He had viewed the message in a manly way—it had opened up charms and qualities in Mrs. Brown which he had not hitherto given her credit for, and he was prepared to show her such attention as he had only hitherto bestowed upon the young and beautiful; and yet this woman—this bony specimen of the tender sex—had not only ignored his condescension, but had hit him very hard over the head with a frying-pan.

He would have liked to have wreaked his vengeance upon her, but he feared that he might get the worst of an encounter with her, and there were only two niggers left. Prior experience warned him that any efforts in that direction would only result in further confusion, so he made the best of it, and confined himself to words of admonition.

"I don't know whether you boys are aweer of it," he said; "probably you ain't, for you are h'ignorant an' uneducated—but let me tell you that when you lead a violent man like me into the way of—of a violent woman with a frying-pan, that she ain't pertickler how to use, you lay yourself open to a serus charge."

"Yah! Massa Chops got de fust floss!" cried Job.

"I forgive you this time," said Chops, "but, mind this, if you do it again, you won't find that I take it so h'easy. Go to bed, both of you."

He put on as much dignity as he could summon to his aid, and stalked back to the cabin, followed by Job and Jake, who hooted him until he closed the door, and then they favored him with a final yell of derision, and scampered off.

"You are back mighty soon," said Beetles.

"Yes," replied Chops. "I ain't much in the humor for female society."

"Ain't you?" said Beetles. "Halloo! What's the matter with your face?"

"My face!"

"Yes; it's all over black."

"To tell the truth," said Chops, failing to find an excuse, "that old woman is a raving maniac, and as soon as I put my head into the door, she struck me viciously with the frying-pan."

"Ha—ha! ho—ho!" roared Beetles. "Oh! my sides, that's a good 'un."

"I don't see nothing to laugh at," said Chops, glaring through the darkness of his countenance.

"But I do," roared Beetles. "Hit with a frying-pan—ha-ha! and yet you are such a party for the gals. Ha-ha! I shall die a laughing."

"Beetles," said Chops, curbing his anger, "this ain't friendly of you."

"I can't help it," replied Beetles, "it's so awful funny. Oh, Chops, wot a man for the gals you are. Even the old ones send for you to sit by the fire."

Chops sat down, and sulkily stared at Beetles, whose eyes were half out of his head. He let him have his laugh out, but it was a long time before Beetles was restored to his original gravity.

"I couldn't help it, Chops," he said; "it was so blessed funny."

"Them niggers," said Chops, gloomily, "is as bad as any."

"Perhaps, Chops, t'others set 'em on," suggested Beetles.

"No," replied Chops, "or they would have been there to see me struck on the head with a—"

"Don't mention it again," said Beetles, getting ready for another fit of laughter, "or I shall bust—don't mention it."

"When niggers gets up to games," said Chops, "times is bad."

"They'll be up to something else directly. Better barricade again."

"I will," said Chops, and once more he secured the stronghold.

He and Beetles had a chilly time of it for the next two hours, but there were no signs of the enemy without, and they were beginning to hope that there was a prospect of peace for the night, when footsteps and murmuring of voices were heard.

"Here they come again," said Beetles.

"Let me have a nerver," replied Chops. "I'll kill somebody this time."

"There ain't no rum left," said Beetles.

"Is there any in the captain's cabin?"

"No, it's all locked up. Listen, Chops, do you hear them?"

"Yes; they are trying the door."

"And somebody speaking—listen."

"It's no use, you can't make out what they are saying."

The wind had got up considerably, and although voices could be heard, it was impossible to recognize the voice or distinguish its tone. A loud knocking followed.

"Let 'em knock," said Beetles; "it's an amusement that won't hurt us much."

"I'd like to have a knock at them," said Chops, savagely. "Now they are shoving the door."

"Stand agin the barricade—put your shoulder to it, Chops."

The barricade was, as we have stated, composed of all the furniture in the room, and it was, indeed, a formidable pile, the topmost part consisting of several chests containing ship's stores. Chops put his back to it, and pushed it with all its might.

The door creaked and groaned, and shouts were heard outside. Cold sweat broke out on the brow of Chops, and Beetles got his crutches ready to strike at the invaders should they succeed in forcing their way into the cabin.

"If I'd known the life I was going to lead," thought Chops, "I'd ha' died of starvation at any door in Peckham rather than have come."

The top of the door split, and part of it bent in. The wind rushed through the opening, and put out the light. Darkness lent its aid to increase the terror of Chops.

"It's as good as murder now, if they get in," he groaned.

The creaking of the barricade, the roaring of the wind, and the voices mingled, as he, with his legs stretched out, pushed with the desperation of despair; but he felt that the odds were against him.

"It's a-comin', Beetles," he said.

"Hold on, be a man," roared Beetles, "don't let 'em in."

"Can't you come and help me, Beetles? Even if you only sat down against the barricade it would be something."

"I dussent move," replied Beetles.

"Then it will be all over in a few minutes," said Chops. "They are a battering on something heavy now."

Mighty thuds fell upon the door, the barricade quivered and trembled, then suddenly the door was burst in, and Chops was buried under a heap of ruins.

He heard voices, and felt the tramp of feet as they hurried over him. Beetles' voice, in full swing with ship language, fell upon his ear—then all was darkness.

"What's this game?" roared a loud voice. "Bring a light somebody, here," muttered Chops, with a shudder. "It's the captain! Here's a horror! here's a mistake!"

"Who planned this?" demanded the captain. "Thank ye, Bantam. Give me the lantern. Now, Beetles, who got this little bit of fun up?"

"We thought it was the boys," replied Beetles.

"We thought it was the boys. Who's we?"

"Me and Chops."

"Where's Chops?"

"Under that lot o' stuff."

"Have him out."

The Bantam and the Tickler cleared away the wreck until they came to Chops, who was lying on his back, groaning most pitifully.

"Get up," said the captain; "you ain't hurt."

"Ain't!" replied Chops. "I don't believe that I've got a sound joint left."

"Gammon! Get up."

Slowly, and apparently with much pain, Chops got upon his feet, and stood panting and rolling his eyes in a most distressed manner.

"Now," said Captain Timber, "will you have the goodness so explain what this confusion means?"

"It's the boys and the niggers and Mrs. Brown," replied Chops.

"What has Mrs. Brown to do with it?" asked the captain.

"She's been a-lying in wait for me and Beetles all the night with a frying-pan," replied Chops, "and just as I rushed out, and was on the pint of capturing the ringleaders, she gave me a oner."

There was enough attesting soot upon his face to confirm this story, and Captain Timber uttered a deep growl of rage. Of all people in the world, he had never expected that Mrs. Brown would rebel against discipline.

"She's a beggarly old woman," he said. "But, hark ye, Chops, why did you barricade the door?"

"To keep the water out," replied Chops. "The boys all took a solemn oath that they would flood your cabin, and got the fire hose at work. We couldn't abear the thought of your sleeping in a wet hammock, so we barricaded 'em out. Me and Beetles have suffered much this night, but things would not have been so bad if it had not been for Mrs. Brown."

This was very artful of Chops, and rather mean of him to avenge his wrongs upon a woman, but he could not resist such an opportunity to give her a return for the blow he had received. Captain Timber stayed to hear no more, but, stalking into his own cabin, closed the door heavily.

"I'm alone at last," he muttered, as he sat down. "There's not one on board as will help me to maintain discipline; but I'll do it myself, I will, or my name ain't Timber. I'll die afore I give in. Shall it be said that old Roger, who's a scar for every hair of his head, was licked by a mob of boys, an addle-headed tutor, two prize-fighters, a man with no legs, a drunken bobby, an old woman, and two little niggers? Never! I'll get 'em under—but how?"

Ay, that was the problem, and lighting up his pipe he sat down to the table to work it out.

CHAPTER X.

A FOUL BLOW.

JERRY SNIVEL was a youth with a large supply of tears constantly on hand. On the least provocation he shed them like rain, making his cheeks grimy and unpleasant to the eye.

A crying boy is never a pleasant object to look upon. Other boys object to him, because a boy with any pluck seldom, if ever, exhibits his tears. He may have them within, and they may, under great provocation, come into his eyes, but he will not let them fall. He forces them back, and bears his pain with a fortitude that made the Spartans of old a distinguished people.

On the other hand, some boys cannot help their little weaknesses, and I dare say that Jerry Snivel was one of them, and a generous nature would have looked over or ignored his little failing. David Crusher had not a generous nature, and he was always down on Jerry.

"What are you driveling about now?" he asked on the following morning, as Jerry sat on the floor, looking the picture of mournfulness and despair.

"I think I've got chilblains coming," replied Jerry.

"Flicking is good for chilblains," said David. "Get up."

"Oh, don't flick me, please!" cried Jerry, in mortal terror, as David advanced upon with a towel.

David grinned, and bade him get up. Jerry lay on the floor, and wriggled like an eel.

"I can't bear pain!" he shrieked. "Oh, don't, please."

"What's the row?" asked Harry Fitzroy, putting his head in at the door.

"I am going to give Jerry a flicking," David said. "He's got chilblains."

"Let him alone," said Harry. "Don't be a brute!"

"Who are you calling a brute?" asked David Crusher, scowling.

"Nobody. I only said 'don't be one.' Let the miserable little devil alone."

"I shall do as I like," said David, savagely. "I'm master here."

"I don't want to interfere with you," replied Harry, "but I can't stand by and see anything unfair. Better let him alone."

"I shall flick him."

"No, you won't. Come here, Jerry."

Jerry lost no time in getting behind Harry, who proceeded to parley further with David.

"You and I are just getting to be good friends. Don't let a little thing like this come between us."

"Then hand Jerry over here."

"No, that I won't. He's weak and helpless and miserable, and I think you ought to be above worrying him. Where's your pluck?"

"Where's yours?" asked David, with a sneer. "You have it when the gloves are over your fists, but—"

"Don't talk nonsense," interposed Harry, quietly. "You know I don't want for courage."

"No, I don't. You are a bully and a cur."

"I'll trouble you, David, to withdraw those words."

"I'll see you hanged first."

"Jerry," said Harry, quietly, "just go and call my fellows to come and see fair play."

It has often been said that our instincts are the only true guide, and instinctively, Harry and David had disliked each other from the first.

For awhile a sort of friendship had been established between them; but on the first opening for a real quarrel the enmity begun with the first glances they exchanged was renewed.

Gerard Warren, Jimmy Bricks, Ned Bowling, and Harry's supporters generally, rallied around him in a few seconds, and a ring was formed in the corridor outside the dormitories, composed of boys in every stage of dress and undress.

Harry was angry, and David was sullen, and the fight promised to be one of interest. Both stripped to their trousers, exhibiting splendid muscles for the admiration of their friends.

Ned Bowling did the honors for Harry, and a lad out of No. 3 dormitory, named Tom Gripper, supported David Crusher, each being furnished with a sponge and ewer of water.

"All ready?" cried out Ned.

"Ready we are," replied Gripper, and the two lads—now, alas! enemies for life—stood up face to face, full of courage and determination.

The training they had received from Bantam and Tickler, now proved of good service. There was no slogging, no rough and tumble give and take, but skillful attack and wary defense.

Harry was, as we have said before, the more skillful of the two, but he was the lighter weight. What David lacked in science he made up in bulk, and the pair were evenly matched, except in the one thing needful—courage.

Now, David was not a coward by any means; he could and would fight as well as most boys, but his pluck was limited. Up to a certain point he could stand his ground; once past that he was bound to yield.

It was a fierce struggle—a terrible one when the age of the boys is considered. Neither of them was fifteen, so that they could hardly lay claim to the title of youth—and manhood was in their mental vision yet far away. But they fought like men—up to a certain point—and then David gave in.

He was severely bruised about the face, and Harry had nearly lost the sight of his left eye when the finish came. Harry struck his opponent one fairly between the eyes and he fell. Gripper raised him up and took him to his corner. Harry staggered back rather blown, and took a seat upon Ned Bowling's knee.

"I think that has finished him," said Ned.

"I hope it has," replied Harry, "for I am nearly done up."

"You have plenty of fight in you yet," said Ned, encouragingly.

"I don't mean to give in," rejoined Harry.

"Time!" cried Ned, and Harry got upon his feet.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Gripper; "my man is not quite ready."

"I'm done," gasped David, "chuck up the sponge."

"Have another try," whispered Gripper.

"No, I can't, but I'll go into training, and have another go on another day," replied David, faintly. "He's given me too much."

"Up she goes, then," said Gripper, and tossed the sponge into the air. A loud cheer hailed Harry as victor.

"Quiet, boys," he said, "no crowing;" then crossing over to the side of his opponent, he held out his hand, and said: "Come, David, let us be friends now."

"What for?" asked David Crusher, with a scowl.

"Because we have had our little fight out,

and it is generous to forgive and forget," returned Harry.

"Is it?" sneered David. "Then I don't mean to be generous, and, what is more, I'll have a go in at you another day, and lick you. I hate you."

"Well, old fellow," said Harry, cheerily, "if hate you will, hate away, and be bothered to you."

"I knew how it would be when first we met," said David, with a scowl. "You were born to be a blot upon my path—my father told me so."

"Your father!" exclaimed Harry, in surprise; "what could he know of me—we never met."

David Crusher did not reply, but gathering his things together, he tossed them over his shoulder, and sullenly strode to his room.

Harry shrugged his shoulders, and went back to his dormitory, followed by his companions.

The other boys hurried back to finish their toilets.

"That Crusher has bad blood in him," said Gerard Warren, as he bathed the victor's eye. "In my opinion, he would do anything for revenge. You have made an enemy of him now with a vengeance."

"I hoped to have made him a friend," returned Harry; "and at one time there seemed a prospect of it."

"It was only a flash in the pan," said Gerard. "There, I think your eye will do now. It seems to be going down already."

When Bantam and Tickler heard of the fight they expressed much disappointment at not having been called in to witness it, and extracted a promise from Harry that he would not engage in another bout unless he sent for them, if they were within call.

"For, mind you," said Bantam, "me and Tickler don't get a treat every day."

"You shall have one if ever we fight again," replied Harry; "for I don't like the way he behaved. He should have taken the licking like a man, and shaken hands over it."

"So he should," replied Bantam.

During the day David and Harry met often, but they never spoke, and it was thoroughly understood between them that there was to be war to the knife. The boys divided as before, with this exception—Harry gained a recruit in Jerry Snivel.

"If ever he interferes with me again," said Jerry, "I shall come to you."

"Awfully good of you," Harry replied, rather drily; "but I dare say he will let you alone. In the meantime see if you can do something for yourself. Dry your eyes, pluck up a little spirit, and act as if you had something inside you beside water."

Late in the afternoon Beetles announced that he was going to give a lesson in navigation—a branch of education which had been much neglected—and just before sunset all the boys assembled on deck. They waited half an hour, and Beetles not appearing they broke up into knots, and walked about skylarking. Presently Captain Timber arrived, dressed in his best—a sure sign that he was going ashore.

"Fall in, my lads," he said; "I've a few words to say to you."

They fell in, and the old man, after a rather noisy use of his pocket-handkerchief, proceeded to address them.

"My lads," he said, "since I started this school things have gone a little against discipline, and there's been more confusion on board than you usually find in a ship. The reason is that I've got men as don't do their duty, and boys as won't do it. Now, I'm not going to blame you, for you are young, and we can't expect old heads on young shoulders, but I've got a notion into my head, and I think I can carry it out, whereby things will be changed."

He paused, and looked about him with the air of a man who had solved a great puzzle. The listeners remained silent, wondering what was coming next.

"Yes," said Captain Timber, "I think I can carry it out, and I'm going to see if I can work it out. While I am away you will, of course, go on with your old games. Don't look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouths, for you know you will, but all I ax is that you won't destroy any property, and that you won't set the *Heart of Oak* on fire. She's a good old ship, she's done her duty, and she cost a pile o' money."

Harry Fitzroy stepped forward, and in the name of the rest promised that his property should be held sacred, and that the lights should be carefully looked after.

"That's right, my lads," said the captain, as he moved away. "As for Chops and Beetles, and such muck, you may do what you like with them, but don't kill 'em outright."

He ran down the ladder, and got into the boat he used for shore-going purposes. As he pulled away the boys spontaneously gave him a loud cheer.

"Really he is not a bad old fellow," said Harry.

"I am sorry if we distress him."

"You can sneak about him if you like," said David Crusher, with a sneer.

"My good fellow," replied Harry, "whatever I do I do openly."

David muttered something, and turned away with the black blood of his nature in his face. Many who saw his looks shuddered, and declared that evil would come to them.

As it was close upon tea-time the boys soon went below, all but Harry, who was engaged in giving his eye an evening bath in a bucket of salt water. Kneeling over it he dipped his handkerchief, and dashed it against his injured organ in the orthodox fashion, humming a song as he did so.

While thus engaged he heard a light footstep behind but paid no particular heed of it, fancying that it was Job or Jake passing by in pursuit of some daily duty. His bathing at length finished, he stood up, raising the bucket to cast the water over the side.

The next moment he felt that he was struck heavily, but where he could not tell. Darkness was before him, his blood seemed to be boiling and bubbling into his head, then came a strange rushing sound, and finally—oblivion.

CHAPTER XI.

WHO DID IT.

"WHERE'S Harry?" said Jimmy Bricks.

"If he isn't sharp, all the bread and butter will be gone."

"He is taking great pains with that eye of his," returned Ned Bowling. "Here, give me some more tea."

"There's only enough for Harry left," said Jimmy Bricks. "Somebody go and call him."

"I will," said Gerard Warren. "I have eaten and drank my fill, and have nothing else to do."

He ran out of the room, but in less than ten seconds he came tumbling back, with a frightened look upon his face.

"What's the matter, Gerard?" asked several voices.

"Come up, all of you," replied Gerard. "Harry is lying dead upon the deck in a mass of blood, with his brains beaten in."

A general exclamation of horror followed, and they all hurried up to the deck, where they found Harry lying in a pool of blood, ghastly white and still.

"Murder!" cried Ned.

"Here, be cool, will you?" cried Jimmy Bricks, kneeling down, and thrusting his hand inside Harry's shirt. "He isn't dead. Get some water."

"Who did it?" asked Ned.

"What matters now?" replied Gerard. "Let us consider that by-and-by."

Some rubbed the palms of his hands, others pulled off his shoes and chafed his feet, and one brought a bucket of water, and sprinkled it over his face. Their united efforts brought back life to him, and he opened his eyes.

"Halloo! what's all this about?" he said, faintly. "Have I been ill?"

"Somebody or something seems to have struck you," replied Ned.

"I remember all now," said Harry.

"Who did it?"

"Why, David Crusher, of course," said Jimmy Bricks; "who else could have done it?"

"Hush!" said Harry; "do not accuse him or anybody else hastily. I don't know who it was. I heard footsteps behind me, but I did not heed them. I thought it was one of the niggers, and was about to look around, when I was struck down."

"David Crusher, I'll bet," said Jimmy Bricks.

"And so say I," said Ned Bowling.

"Don't let us be hasty," said Harry. "Whatever we may think, let us have proofs before we accuse anybody. Give me a hand down, will you? I am rather faint, and should like to rest a little bit before we talk it over."

They helped him down, and as they reached the bottom of the stairs, David Crusher came out in a casual way. His hat was on the back of his head, his hands were thrust into his pockets, and he was whistling.

Harry looked at him, and their eyes met. David could not stand his gaze, and turned away.

"Stop a minute," said Harry. "I want to have a word with you."

"Well, what is it?" asked Crusher, turning half around.

"I have been struck in a cowardly manner," said Harry. "Some fellow sneaked up behind me, and dealt me a heavy blow with some weapon."

"Oh, indeed!" returned David, yawning; "it's no business of mine."

"It will be my business to find out who did it," said Harry, "and when I do, I will make it very hot for them."

"And serve them right," said David; "but if I were you I wouldn't make so much fuss about a broken head. It would be unworthy of brave Harry Fitzroy."

"I understand your sneer," said Harry, calmly, "and your remarks need no answer. You know as well as I do that if the blow had been given in fair fight I should say nothing about it, but when we have cowardly, murderous sneaks on board I think it only right to find them out."

"I hope you will be successful," said David, and walked away.

"He did it," said Gerard Warren.

"I'd swear it," said Ned Bowling.

"And I," added Jimmy Bricks, "will stake my musical reputation upon it. He could not look you straight in the face."

"That was nothing," said Harry. "Be easy with your judgments, dear boys. He is violent, passionate, and unforgiving, but I can hardly believe that he is a sneak."

"Massa Harry," cried Jake, suddenly tumbling down the ladder, "what am de marrer?"

"I have been murderously assaulted," replied Harry.

"Dat so?" cried Jake; "den me and Job know who did it."

"Come in here," said Harry.

"Shall I fetch Job, massa?"

"Yes, by all means."

Harry entered the dormitory, followed by his friends, and in less than a minute Job and Jake, in a state of great excitement, joined them.

Harry, reclining on a bunk, had them brought before him, and in a calm, judicial manner put them under examination.

"Did you see me struck?" he asked.

"No, Massa Harry," replied Job, "but we hear de party do it."

"You heard them? How the deuce could you do that?"

"We heard dem larse night."

"Well, this is stranger still!" exclaimed Harry.

"What do you mean?"

"Tell de story, Job," said Jake.

"No, you tell him, Jake."

"Berry well den," said Jake. "Larse night 'bout nine I—"

"Larse night as eber was," put in Job.

"Hold dat row, and let me tell de story," said Jake.

"Berry well—only gib de truf, Jake."

"Larse night I was on deck with Job," recommenced Jake, "when we was near de door ob Massa Beetles' cabin—"

"De cabin whar Massa Beetles lib," explained Job.

"Now, Jake, he not lib dere all de day, he—"

"No, he don't," said Job.

"Job, you am a big lie."

"You am anoder, Jake."

"Put one of these niggers outside," said Harry, "and let the other tell the story."

As this appeared to be a necessity, Job was hustled outside, and warned not to show his head until sent for. Then from Jake was extracted a detailed account of the conversation between Beetles and Chops, which we have already recorded. Our readers will remember that it finished up with a promise from Chops that he would inflict vengeance upon the boys, in detail, and the case looked dark against him.

"Now put Jake out and bring Job in," said Harry.

This was done, and Job, after a little roundabout business, told much the same story. The guilt of Chops was almost clear.

The listeners were indignant, and threats were muttered on every side. Ned Bowline was for pitching Chops overboard at once, and Jimmy Bricks advocated his being rope-ended all over the ship, but Harry—the real sufferer—was calmer.

"Even Chops shall have a fair trial," he said, "but it cannot come on to-night. I am thoroughly worn out, and want rest. To-morrow, if we get a chance, we will try them by court-martial. Unless they have a good defense, I swear that both shall be hanged at the yard-arm."

"Hanged!" echoed the others, incredulously.

"Yes," said Harry, with a faint smile. "I

give my word that it shall be done, and my word, you know, I never break."

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL AND SENTENCE.

CAPTAIN TIMBER did not return that night, and the good news spreading, the pupils of the School of the Sea prepared themselves for a day's fun, or, at least, a time of enjoyment, until the gallant captain should return.

What scheme he had on hand for the maintenance of discipline they knew not, but there were all sorts of whispers afloat, and many were fully convinced that their days of liberty were almost over. To be happy while they could, was, therefore, resolved upon.

A night's rest did wonders for Harry, and expecting a tenderness at the back of the head, he felt no inconvenience from the blow he had received. He was as jaunty and buoyant as ever as the lads tumbled up on deck for morning exercise.

Mr. Jones was there before them, having been much troubled all night with a dream of Matilda married to another, which made him feverish and restless, and the cool air was refreshing to his aching head.

Job and Jake were there, too, and from them came the delightful intelligence that the captain was still away. "And what more," said Job, "he send a man from de shore to tell ole Missus Brown dat he not be back afore night. Golly, what a lark!"

Mr. Jones promptly realized the position, and dived below; but he need not have been in such a hurry, for no disturbance took place until the day's rations were served out, accompanied by the usual skirmishing between Mrs. Brown and her two "helps"—Job and Jake.

The rations served, breakfast was partaken of, and a consultation between Harry and a body of boys—who were to be the members of the court-martial—was held. A decision was soon arrived at, and Harry, getting upon a tub, imparted it to the whole school.

He told them of the assault—which was old news—and how suspicion against Chops had arisen, and declared his intention to have both Chops and Beetles arrested and tried forthwith.

The tidings were hailed with delight, particularly by David Crusher, who roared and danced in a mad fashion, and begged to be allowed to form one of the court-martial, and Harry added him to their number.

All this time Chops and Beetles, who had been indulging rather freely over night, were sound asleep, unconscious of their coming fate. Beetles lay in his bunk, and Chops was curled up on the floor, gasping and groaning like a man in a fit.

He was aroused from his disordered dream by a sensation of being lifted in the air, and waking up, he found himself borne along by a number of boys, shouting with glee; a little on ahead he beheld Beetles in a similar situation. The language that Beetles was using was of the ship, shippy.

"Wot now?—wot now?" cried Chops. "Wot new h'outrage on the law is this? Do you know the man you are dragging by the arms and legs?"

"Oh, yes. We know you," said Ned Bowling. "Then why don't you stand more in awe of me? Do you know the h'utmost penalty for jerking the law up and down?"

"The law," said Ned, "is going to be tried for attempted murder."

The eyes of Chops fairly started out of his head as he received this communication, and a chilly feeling ran all over him, but he remembered that they were only boys and given to larks, and was reassured.

"You are the merriest lot o' little chaps I ever met," he said. "But I like to see it. It reminds me of my youthful days."

"You won't think of them much longer," said Ned.

Again Chops grew cold, and he was like ice when they put him down before Harry Fitzroy, and skilfully bound his arms.

The members of the court-martial—eight in number, with Harry for president—sat solemnly around the drum. The rest of the boys stood about at a respectful distance—also serious and solemn. One and all felt the impressiveness of the hour.

Chops was dismayed, and glared about him like a man in a dream. What did it all mean? What had he and Beetles done to be—stop—a thought flashed across his mind, and a moan escapes his quivering lips.

Beetles was not bound. They simply put him on the ground out of reach of everything that would assist him to rise, and he was as helpless as a turtle on its back. The position did not im-

prove his temper, and each moment he grew more shippy.

"Come this way, some on yer," he roared. "Let me hook on your blessed carcasses with my blessed hook. Let me have the blessed life o' some blessed boy."

"Quiet, there," cried Harry.

"Quiet be—"

"Gag him," said Harry. "The court can't be annoyed in this way."

Beetles heard the order, and, feeling that it would be carried out if he were not quiet, collapsed; but strange rumblings came from his interior, and, judging by the look of his eyes and cheeks, he was on the way towards an explosion.

"He's a werry violent," said Chops, faintly; "he never can take a joke like any other man. For my part, I reg'lar enjoys it."

"You won't enjoy the end of this joke, I'll bet," said David Crusher, with a grim smile.

"Silence, if you please," said Harry, rising; "and order in the court. Prisoners at the bar; you are brought here to-day on a charge of attempting the murder of a fellow-creature—viz, myself—who, while on deck last night, was struck down by some heavy weapon."

"Very much like a policeman's truncheon," put in David Crusher.

"Allow me to explain [the case," said Harry, coldly. "Chops, you are charged with the committal of the crime. Beetles, you are charged with being an accessory before and after the fact. How say you, Chops, are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Never in my life—h'even in my early h'official days—did I strike a boy," murmured Chops; "and much I've put up with, knowing their ways were juvenile. There was one boy as went to the commercial school opposite the bakehouse, as comes up behind me one day, and fetched me a oner with a bag of books that made me gasp for ten minutes; but I took it kind, for he was but a boy, and the ways of boys are free."

"Have the goodness to reply—guilty or not guilty?" said Harry.

"When I look back on my own youth," said Chops, "I sees many things I've done as I'm sorry for; but you can't expect boys to understand the law, for their ways is free and—"

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," said Chops, with a sudden effort, "on the word of a man as was a credit to the force, and left it on his own account to venture a little money in a bacca shop, which a mean landlord shut up at the end of the fust three months, and well he knowed that the snuff-jars covered the money, and—"

"Beetles," said Harry, cutting Chops short, "how say you—are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty of wot?" asked Beetles, with a scowl.

"Of being an accessory to an attempted murder."

"I don't know about attempting murder," said Beetles, with a few shippy expressions; "but I know I'd like to murder somebody just now."

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, and be (all sorts of things) to you?"

"Call Job," said Harry.

Job was at hand and came forward with his evidence, which he gave pretty clearly. Chops was asked if he had anything to say to him.

"Oh, Job," said Chops, "how can you come and lie agin a man that's got the feelings of a father in him?"

"It's not a lie—it am de trufe," said Job.

"Go thy evil way," said Chops, tearfully. "When I'm dead and gone you'll be sorry for this."

Beetles, on being asked if he had any questions to put, merely discoursed on niggers generally, giving his opinion of the whole race of black boys, and expressing a strong desire to dissect a few of them for the benefit of science or something else.

"Call Jake," cried Harry.

Jake came and gave confirmatory evidence. Chops occasionally gave vent to tears, and on being desired to cross-examine him he groaned dismally.

"Boys have changed," he said. "In my time I couldn't ha' done it—comin' up and lyin' ag'in a poor old man! I scorns to ask him anything."

Beetles had no questions to ask, but he was in such a fury that he spun around on his axis like a teetotum until Ned Bowling, obeying a sign from Harry, stopped him with the handle of a broom.

The court consulted in whispers for a few minutes with very solemn faces, David Crusher alone showing the signs of a smile; and he, for some reason, seemed to be unable to contain

himself. He was quite purple under the pressure of stifled laughter.

At the end of the consultation Harry arose, and removed his hat, looking solemnly at Chops, who was now a ghastly spectacle, his whole face—nose excepted—being livid.

"Prisoners at the bar," said Harry, "you have had a long and patient trial, and, on the clearest evidence, you have been proven guilty of having at least designed to take the lives or seriously injure one or more of your fellow-creatures; and the sentence of the court is that you be taken to the yard-arm, and there be hanged until—"

Emotion choked the further utterance of Harry, and the rest of the words were lost. Sitting down, he buried his face in his handkerchief; the rest of the court did so, and the whole body quivered with emotion. As for the outside public, they were obliged one, and all, to go and look over the ship's side.

Hanged at the yard-arm!

Life is dear to us all. Old and young, rich and poor, the sick and ailing, all cling to it, and Chops, with a wild cry, threw himself upon his knees.

"MERCY!" he cried. "Have mercy on—on a—"

"Confess your guilt," said Harry.

"Me and Beetles," said Chops, "leastways, Beetles began it, and it came about this way. Oh! tell me if it ain't a joke."

Harry made a single sign with his hand, and Beetles, still indulging in language which none of our compositors would set up for love or money, was lifted up. The rope was ready for him, with a hook at one end, and a half a dozen boys at the other.

"See if that is a joke," said Harry. "Hoist away!"

The hook was fixed in the belt of Beetles, and up he went, violently expostulating, until he was about ten feet in the air, when he became suddenly quiet.

"Look," said Harry. "Last night I vowed I would avenge the cruel attack upon me, and it is done—look!"

"I dussent," gasped Chops, putting his hands before his eyes. "Kind boys—noble boys—generous boys—forgiving boys—think of what I have done for you."

"And pray," added Harry, sarcastically, "what have you done for us?"

"Everything," said Chops, wriggling in his humiliation and agony. "Wasn't I sent for to keep order aboard, and have I done it? Wasn't I told to let you have it right and left if you disobeyed orders, and can any boy with a generous, noble, forgiving 'art—such as you all have—say that I've done it?"

"Go on," said Harry, and the court chorussed a general: "Go on."

"Who's been kind to you but your Chops?" continued the doomed one, raising a pitiful face. "Who loved to catch you when you fell, and—and rubbed the place to make it well, but Chops? You know it was me."

"We don't know anything of the sort," said Harry. "All we want of you is to confess your guilt."

"I—I—Beetles knows I'm innocent," replied Chops.

"You're a mighty malicious warmint," said Beetles, from aloft, "or I shouldn't be in this fix."

"You hear," said Harry. "Prepare yourself for the worst. Executioners, do your duty."

The brains of Chops swam around—the rush of waters was in his ears—visions of Peckham and other haunts of his early days uprose in the usual way before him—his lips opened and shut—and then—

He felt himself rising in the air.

The rope, he was certain, was around his neck, but the greatest pain was around his waist. It was odd but true; and opening his eyes, he found himself slowly turning in the air, with Beetles a few feet away performing the same feat.

"Dash it!" he said. "They've hung us up by our waists."

"Who says they ain't?" growled Beetles. "And what's more, they've left us like two blessed chickens on a blessed jack to roost. They are all gone."

It was but too true. The members of the court and the public were gone. Chops and Beetles were left to their fate.

"It kind o' ketches me in the breath," gasped Chops. "I say, Beetles, have you got a knife?"

"I have," growled Beetles; "but wot's the good of it? I can't use it, and your hands are tied."

"Here's a persition for a man of authority,"

groaned Chops. "Here's a defying of legal authority. Keep still a minute, Beetles, I want to speak to you."

"Can I help twisting and turning?" snarled Beetles. "Keep still—if you can."

"I wonder if anybody will come to help us?" murmured Chops. "Mr. Jones sometimes comes up about this time for air and exercise. Oh, here is Mrs. Brown."

That amiable gentlewoman, ignorant of what had been going on, came out on deck, and seeing, as she fancied, the deck clear, began to spread out some articles of female apparel on the bulwarks to dry. She never thought of looking aloft, and was rather taken aback when Chops spoke again in his softest tones.

"Good, gentle Mrs. Brown, give us a hand, will yer?"

Mrs. Brown looked up and down the deck, over the deck, and, at last, raised her eyes. The sight she beheld brought from her lips a little scream.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "How did you get up there?"

As she asked this question, Chops, who continued to slowly turn, presented the soles of his feet to her, but as soon as he faced her again, he replied.

"We didn't get up here," he said. "We was put."

"Put there? Who did it?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"The boys," replied Chops.

"The blessed boys, with their blessed cheek!" growled Beetles.

"And do you mean to say that you were not men enough to stop 'em?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Well—we—was—in a kind o' way asleep when they come on us," replied Chops. "We was took sudden."

"Bah!" said Mrs. Brown.

"Dear Mrs. Brown," pleaded Chops, "please to cut us down. We've been up here two hours at least."

"Let her loose the rope at t'other end," said Beetles, "and lower us gently. If she cuts away I break my neck."

"Well, really, I don't know why I should bother myself about you men. You never bothered yourself about me."

"Don't say that," said Chops. "Did I not come to visit thee, and did not thou—in a sort of way—give me a oner with a frying-pan?"

"How should I know that it was you?" asked Mrs. Brown. "I thought it was one of them villanous little niggers. I've been on board from the first, and neither of you so much as gave me a good morning."

"We was too bashful," said Chops.

"A blessed sight too bashful," added Beetles.

"I'm one o' them as feels timid when I'm in love," said Chops.

"Oh, get away, do!" said Mrs. Brown, coyly; "you in love!"

"I'm up to my neck in it," said Chops. "Oh, my ribs!—I never loved 'arf so much afore—oh! I'm being cut in two."

"You are in love with some girl ashore, then?"

"Mrs. Brown, do I ever go ashore?—leastways, I've only been once, by orders—oh, my sides! I can't leave the ship. I'm held here hand and foot by love, and the h'object of my affections is thou."

"You say so now," said Mrs. Brown, "because you are in trouble. Is your affection real?"

"It comes from my 'art," groaned Chops.

"Will you marry me?"

For one moment, and one moment only, Chops paused, but his agony made him desperate, and he answered:

"Yes."

"How soon?"

"When you like," cried Chops. "Oh! don't stop—there's an angel—I'm thine for ever, and if you don't like me, have Beetles."

"I ain't a marrying man," said Beetles, hurriedly. "Besides, Chops, I wouldn't rob a friend."

"I don't want a bit of a man," said Mrs. Brown, "and I accept Mr. Chops. Now, what am I to do?"

"Cut that ere rope first, where the boys have tied it," said Chops. "Have you got a knife, my sweet?"

"No, my love."

"Then get one, my dear. Oh, my sides! I'm breaking in two."

Mrs. Brown hurriedly procured a knife, and cut that which held Chops fast. He came down flop on the deck, and every bone of his body was shaken and every particle of breath knocked out of his body.

"Confound the woman," he gasped, "why couldn't she do it easier?"

Down came Beetles on the top of him, and Beetles, being in one of his blind passions, which always led him to exercise his vengeance on the nearest object, he began clawing away like a madman, and Chops would have suffered considerable damage if Mrs. Brown had not rushed to the rescue.

Seizing him by the legs, she dragged him away from his infuriated friend, and giving him a helping hand, raised him to his feet.

Then she threw her arms around his neck, and cried:

"My own, my darling Chops, we will never part again."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN TIMBER BECOMES MYSTERIOUS.

WE have all heard the story of the tiger cubs which some kindly-disposed old gentleman reared on milk and vegetables, and how docile and tractable they were under that mild form of diet; and we all know how, when he accidentally cut his finger, and the cubs, while licking his hand, tasted blood, they from that hour thirsted for it, finally making a meal of that kindly-disposed old gentleman, and departing to their native wilds, turning their backs on milk and vegetables forever.

The story is undoubtedly true, and they are many ways of tasting blood. Harry Fitzroy and his chums had tasted it on the night they went ashore to that little sparring match at Jim Crippler's, and course they hungered and thirsted to go again.

And they went, accompanied by the Bantam and Tickler, and had a very merry night. Captain Timber knew of their going long before the hour of starting, and when Chops told him of it, he only said:

"Let 'em go—let 'em have their fling. I'll have mine by-and-by."

"Shall I go 'arter 'em?" asked Chops.

"What's the use of you?" replied the captain, and Chops retired humbled and crestfallen, conscious that he had lost prestige with his employer.

Chops was borne down in more ways than one, for Mrs. Brown—who was a nice old woman in her way, but not the sort of charmer men generally go in for—claimed him for her own, and was so confoundedly affectionate that Chops got no peace or rest from her.

She dodged him like a shadow, sometimes hovering around him like a guardian angel—at other times hanging on his arm and walking him up and down like an invalid, who was in need of help during his perambulations.

He would have cast her off, but the truth must be told—Chops was afraid of her, and when she asked him when the day should be, he did not dare to openly say "never," but took refuge in evasive replies.

"As soon as possible," he would say, "when I have arranged my affairs."

What affairs he had to arrange we cannot say, but that they were of the utmost importance may be inferred from the time they took to settle. An entire week elapsed, and they seemed to be in the same state, and at last Mrs. Brown became impatient. A week at her time of life means something, and she was resolved not to put up with any delay.

"Since you've asked me to be your wife," she said, one night, "I am not going to be humbugged. When is it to be?"

"My affairs," murmured Chops, "are very complicated, but as soon—"

"Oh, bother your affairs!" said Mrs. Brown, impatiently. "Name the day."

"I'll think it over," replied Chops, in despair, "and let you know."

"You bring an answer in the morning," she said, "or it will be the worst for you."

Chops shut himself up in his own lock-up for an hour, groaning in spirit, and not being able to arrange any plan of escape sought an interview with Beetles. He expected that his friend would suggest poisoning the old woman at once, but to his dismay Beetles went on the other tack.

"Marry her," said Beetles, chuckling; "she'll be a blessin' to you."

"Oh, Beetles," groaned Chops, "did ye ever venture in matrimony?"

"Never," said Beetles, "I've been pursood all my life, but I never gave in."

"But you get peace now," urged Chops.

"No, I don't," returned Beetles, gruffly. "Long afore Mother Brown fixed on you she was at me, pointing out how nice it would be to have a woman as loved me, and would look arter me, and see that I took the bearings of a cheer all right;

and all sorts of warmint ways that wimen are given to she practised, but I warn't to be taken in."

"Then why do you tell me to marry her?" asked Chops, savagely.

"Because I think that you'll make an 'andsome pair," replied Beetles, and then he went into a swelling fit of silent laughter, and looked more like a fresh boiled lobster than ever.

"If I marry that old woman I'm lost," murmured Chops, as he left the cabin. "I won't do it—I can't do it. I'll ax the cap'en to protect me."

He did ask Captain Timber, and fared worse than ever. When the captain heard the story from Chops, he, too, seemed to enjoy it, and after a fit of laughter told the agonized policeman to go and marry her at once.

"What do you mean by coming aboard the *Heart of Oak*, and trifling with the affections of a woman like that?" he said. "Go and marry her—more, you shall marry her, and I'll pay for the license. I'll go ashore and get it to-morrow."

"Once I'm married I shall lose my h'official power," said Chops.

"It don't matter to me what you lose," returned the captain. "You are in honor bound to marry that woman, and you shall do it."

Chops went again into his lock-up, and kept there until a late hour, feeling exactly like a man condemned to be hanged. Mrs. Brown found him out, and asked him to come forth at once, as she had something to say to him.

"I can't," he said; "I'm arranging my affairs."

"You had better arrange them smart," she said, and went away.

The moon was shining when he came ferth, and found the deck clear of all except Beetles, who was taking a little fresh air before turning in. He hailed Chops cheerily.

"How goes it, mate?" he said. "How's the missus?"

"Beetles," groaned Chops, "I've ever been a friend to thee, don't be 'ard on me now."

"It must be a joyful thing to have a woman like that," chuckled Beetles.

"It was brought about by them boys," hissed Chops, with a venomous fire, "and I'll be awenged."

"Massa Chops and Missie Brown
Goin' to be married in de town."

sang a pair of voices, and Job and Jake danced before him.

"Here's two as bad as any," growled Chops. "Now, Beetles, I'll chivy 'em, and if one comes anigh, you hook on."

"I'll hook any boy with pleasure," replied Beetles, and Chops darted forth in pursuit.

His attack was very sudden, and Jake, to escape him, had to come very near Beetles, who thrust out a hook, and caught Jack in the rear.

"Now, my lad, I've got you," growled Beetles, and began to haul in.

But a tearing sound was heard, and all he caught was about six square inches of Jake's garment. At the same moment Job darted between Chop's legs, and turned him over on to his head. This feat accomplished, the pair fled, singing:

"Massa Chops and Missie Brown,
Goin' to be married in de town."

"It's no use," said Chops, as he slowly arose. "Beetles, let 'em be."

Beetles made no reply, but shaking the fragment of cloth off the hook, he retired, leaving Chops to his reflections.

That same night Mr. David Jones sought an interview with Captain Timber, to lay a report before him. The old salt received him in his cabin, and brought out grog and pipes in a jovial manner.

"You've come to complain, of course," he said.

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Jones; "but I think it my duty to lay the state of the school before you."

"Heave ahead, my lad."

"In the first place," said the tutor, "I must tell you about the state of my branch. I do it, knowing that I shall be standing in my own light, but it is my duty, and duty comes before everything."

"That's right, my lad. I like them sort of sentiments. Go on."

"The boys, Captain Timber, are learning nothing," said Mr. Jones.

"Just so," was the calm reply.

"It is impossible for me to keep order or to enforce obedience. I want fifty eyes and fifty pairs of hands to do it."

"Which you haven't got."

"No, Captain Timber, I have not. And the pranks played upon me are simply abominable. I never know what is coming. One morning it was a bottle of gum all over my stool; when I sought to rise, and found myself sticking, the boys, led off by Bricks, sang: 'Catch him alive, all the green tutor and bluebottle flies.'"

"It warn't a bad trick," said Captain Timber, complacently; "but it ain't the sort o' thing for aboard ship. Discipline must be maintained."

"I hope it will, Captain Timber, but at present we have none to maintain. The next morning when I rubbed my hand over the seat to see if there was any gum I found a lot of pins prepared for me, and I assure you that I have the scratches still."

"You must have been a fool to suppose that they would come the same trick two days running," said the captain, gruffly.

"Other tricks I will not enumerate," said the tutor; "let it suffice for me to tell you that the pupils are masters of the situation."

"I know it, but they won't be so long. Go on."

"Then Beetles gives them no lessons in navigation. I don't wish to complain of my co-tutor, but really he never seems to think about it!"

"I know he doesn't. But we'll square that by-and-by."

"The boys are simply going to ruin."

"All in time, my lad. I'll put 'em right directly," and the captain winked to himself in a delighted manner.

"I should really like to know your plans," said Mr. Jones; "for really we have had so many failures, that I begin to despair, and—"

"This one won't fail," returned the captain, "and as soon as I've married Chops off—"

"Chops going to be married!"

"Yes, to Mrs. Brown. She insists upon it," said the captain.

"Ha—ha! ho—ho!" roared the tutor. "I never heard anything like it."

"Ain't it good?" cried the captain. "Here! Mix yourself a little more grog, and let us drink to 'em—Mr. and Mrs. Chops. Ha—ha!"

The tutor choked in his tumbler, but he managed at the second effort to drink to the coming happiness of the pair, and he and the captain made merry together until the night had far advanced.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WEDDING.

"ALL I ax, sir," said Chops, humbly, "is that the boys don't know nothing of it."

"I'll keep it as dark as I can," replied Captain Timber. "But as we are going ashore, they are sure to guess that something is up."

"When is it to be?" asked Chops.

"To-morrow," replied the captain. "I've got the license, and I've seen the parson. The sooner these things are settled the better."

Chops cast a gloomy eye around the cabin, and wondered which was the shortest and quickest way of killing a woman. A bitter hatred of the sex generally had settled upon him.

"I think she might ha' let me alone," he said; "I never did anything to harm her."

"You've got such a way with women," said Captain Timber, "and you are such a handsome fellow that they can't resist you. Ha—ha!"

"Beetles has been talking to you, sir?" said Chops.

"I often talk to Beetles—but there, go and prepare for to-morrow. I've bought a dozen white favors—each as big as a plate. We will go in state, and make a jolly day of it."

Without showing any signs that he was likely to share in the general bliss, Chops gloomily left the cabin, and dropped upon Beetles, who was lying on his back in his bunk—smoking.

"Beetles," he said, "the 'ole lot of you will be sorry for this."

"You ought to rejoice," said Beetles.

"You don't know wot you are doing?" said Chops.

"It ain't wot we are doing, it's wot you are going to do."

"It's a serious job," said Chops, "and serious work will come of it."

"Wot do yer mean?"

"Never mind, Beetles; you don't know what you've led me into. But I don't care. She'll be the greatest sufferer."

Beetles sat up in his bunk, and looked at Chops with a face like a ball of fire.

"Don't!" he said.

"Don't wot?"

"Don't try it—she's the best hand at that work, I'll bet."

"Wot work?"

"Wollop!" said Beetles. "You'll come off second best at that. Remember the frying pan. Ha—ha ho—ho!—my sides will bust."

"I wish the lot of yer would go off with a bang," growled Chops, as he hurried out. "But I don't care. They don't know the fix they've put me in."

He found his charmer on deck, picking an old dress to pieces, and getting ready for the morrow. She smiled upon him one of her sweetest smiles, but he responded with a frown.

"So, mum," he said, standing before her with folded arms, "you've made up your mind to go through with this job?"

"I would not disappoint you for worlds," she replied, bashfully.

"Have you the least idea, mum," pursued Chops, "wot it is to marry one of the force—to take to your buzzum, as I may say, a man who lives at variance with his feller-man?"

"The force generally are very kind to women," returned Mrs. Brown.

"Troo," said Chops—"that is, while they goes no further than a airy chat, and a bit of pickin' in the kitchen, but when it comes to havin' an official allus with you, then it ain't so pleasant."

"Love will make all things smooth," said Mrs. Brown, with undiminished sweetness.

"There was a friend of mine in the force," said Chops, "who married a party as was cook in an 'ouse in Bryanston Square. There never was a happier couple afore their union; but afterwards, as she yielded to him in a respectful manner, things warn't bad; but a fatal mistake blighted his happiness, and him and her are now both in the workus."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Brown, indifferently.

"Yes," continued Chops; "he was an uncommon active party, and when there was no case movin' he made one. He was the best hand out at drunks and disorderlies, and he generally fixed on women. He was also a favorite with the licensed witellers, and sometimes got so many drinks around the corner that he couldn't see. On one of these ere occasions he hit a woman on the head with two bloaters in a paper, as was goin' home—"

"Two bloaters going home?" said Mrs. Brown. "Dear me!"

"Not the bloaters, mum, but the woman," replied Chops. "And he took her to the station, and he charged her and had her locked up; and when he appeared afore her in the morning he found it was his own wife. Conceive, mum, the feelings of them parties."

"Of course, he set her free?" said Mrs. Brown. "It was only a mistake."

"Not he, mum," replied Chops. "He'd got a dooty to perform, and he did it. Wife or no wife, he was bound to stand by his case, and she, bein' a proud party, gave a false name, and got seven days. But the thing got wind, and he was obliged to leave the force."

"Ah! he was not like you, my dear, ducky Chops; he was not a man of deep affections. You will always love your Brown!"

An alarming symptom of devotion setting in, Chops stayed to give no more forcible illustrations of the perils attendant upon marrying one of the force, but fled to his lock-up—his only place of refuge.

Was it not strange that the place he designed for others should become his own—that the prison intended for his fellow-man should be his only place of refuge? but such are the ways of wayward fate. Man too often sets snares for the world, and gets into them himself. It is only right—it is retributive justice.

There he passed a wretched night, with such dreams, as only those with a terrible fate hanging over them can dream, and, awaking unrefreshed, he went out to the deck, where the cold light which precedes the coming day faintly shone. Filling a bucket with water, he laved his heated head, and cursed the coming day.

Up rose the sun and forth came the captain, with a box under his arm, which he put down, and shook hands with Chops.

"We shall have a fine day," he said.

"The day's nothing to me," replied Chops. "Wot's in that box?"

"Favors," replied Timber, "white favors. There's one for all the men. Come into the cabin, and have a drink. Beetles is there."

Beetles was there, in a lobster state, dressed in his best, and well on with drink. He hooked Chops by the coat, and shook him heartily, as an intimation that he congratulated him.

"You looks uncommon merry," said Chops, savagely.

"I'm all aglow with it," replied Beetles, and but for the assistance rendered him by the captain he would have fallen off his chair.

"Have a drink, Chops," said Captain Timber.

Chops took one, and sat down, the most dismal bridegroom that ever had half a quarter of rum at six o'clock on his wedding morning. By-and-by Bantam and Tickler came in, and they, too, had a drink.

"It's against principle to have it so early," said the Bantam, "for it's ruin to bone, nerve, and muscle; but on this occasion we don't mind. Here's luck and happiness to you, Mister Chops!"

"He's got a good 'un," said the Tickler, in a hoarse whisper.

"Thanky, I'm sure," growled Chops; "but I wish one o' you had her."

"Wouldn't rob you for bags o' gold," said the Tickler.

"You'll all be sorry for it," said Chops. "You don't know the man you are goin' to marry to a woman who is p'ison to him."

"Hush!" said Beetles. "Be manly. She can't help her bones."

Mr. Jones now entered, and shook hands with Chops.

"Have a drink," said Captain Timber.

"It's wonderfulearly," replied Mr. Jones; "but on this occasion—why—really—I will."

He had one, and it made him light-hearted and festive. He got the Bantam into a corner and favored him with a glowing description of Matilda. The Bantam was inclined to think she was a "rare sort," and expressed his regret that Mr. Jones was not going to make a double job of it.

So they drank and made merry until eight o'clock, when Jake brought in a coffee-pot, and other things, and they had breakfast. After breakfast they had more drinks, and Jones took the Tickler into another corner, and gave him a description of Matilda, and invited him to his wedding if ever it came off.

The steadiest drinker of the lot was Chops. He was priming himself for the task of the day; but every fresh tippie made his eye more gloomy, and gave additional radiance to his nose.

"You don't know the man you are fixing up," he kept saying; "if you did, you wouldn't do it—you dussen't do it."

About half past nine the captain brought out the favors—neat things of blue and white, about a foot in diameter, with metal anchors in the middle—and pinned one on the coat of every man present. Then he announced his intention of seeking the bride.

"I leave Chops to you," he said to Bantam and Tickler. "Take him to St. Jude's Church, and I'll soon follow with the bride. I'm her father to day, and I'll give her away. Ha—ha! ho—ho!"

"Ha—ha!" laughed the others in chorus, and Beetles rolled to the ground.

"You seem to be very merry," said Chops, scowling.

"These are merry times," continued Captain Timber. "Take him away."

"I suppose them blessed boys will be on deck," said Chops, as he arose.

But no; the deck was clear, and with a feeling of gratitude for this attention to his feelings, he went down and took his seat in the boat. The Bantam carried Beetles in his arms, and the Tickler and Mr. Jones followed.

The two prize-fighters pulled, and they were speedily ashore, and started for St. Jude's Church. On the way they stopped to drink twice, and over this last tumbler Mr. Jones bewailed the absence of Matilda with tears.

"She is the flower of a large family," he said, "and she is wasting her time looking after her little brothers and sisters. Oh, that she were here!"

"Bear up," said the Bantam. "You'll be able to hook on some day."

"It's only a question of furniture," sobbed Mr. Jones. "Apartments are too expensive for beginners. The charges of kitchen firing are ruinous."

"It's time to go on," said the Tickler.

As they went down the road their favors naturally attracted a large amount of attention, and one man affectionately inquired "where the bride was, and why she had runned away?" The tears of Mr. Jones led people to infer that he was the bridegroom, and all sorts of suggestions were thrown out to aid him in recovering his supposed missing bride.

But they got to the church at last, where a verger and a pew opener took the party in charge, and led the way to the altar rails. Chops, hearing a chuckling in the gallery, looked up, and beheld the pupils of the School on the Sea seated in a body, and exulting over his downfall. Burning with rage, he turned upon Beetles, shook his fist in his face, and exclaimed:

"Demon, this is thy work!"

"You mustn't quarrel here," interposed the

verger. "The clergyman will be here directly, and if he sees that you are drunk he won't marry you."

"Then let him leave it alone," said Chops.

"Shut up, will you?" growled the Bantam, "and give the 'sponses when you are axed for 'em."

Chops faintly smiled, but yielded. The Bantam looked very ferocious, and might do anything if incited to it. As a matter of prudence, therefore, the bridegroom obeyed.

A few moments later Captain Timber appeared, supporting the bride, who was very limp and faint, and constantly sniffed at a bottle of smelling salts which the captain had bought on the way. Then the clergyman appeared, and after one doubtful glance at the party, began the ceremony.

Chops stood gloomily defiant before his bride, and she, with a tender love upon her face, gave the responses in a faint whisper, and Mr. Jones accompanied the whole proceeding with sobs and tears, until the verger took him by the arm and led him outside, and kept guard over him.

When Chops was asked if he would have that woman for his wedded wife, he glared indignantly at the clergyman, and made no answer. The Bantam, previously instructed, gave him a dig in the ribs, and hoarsely whispered:

"Now, then, time's up—come to the scratch."

"I will," replied Chops, in a hollow tone of voice, and that was taken by the clergyman for his answer. He and his bride were one. Mrs. Brown had sunk forever, and Mrs. Chops risen in her stead.

In the vestry there was some little confusion created by Chops signing himself as "Inspector Chops," which the clergyman said would not do, and Beetles, with the pen in his mouth, made a big cross in the wrong place, thereby crossing out the marriage of a man who had been made happy the day before.

Mrs. Chops wrote, with a trembling hand, "Martha Chops," and on completing that performance fell into the arms of her devoted husband, who exclaimed: "Oh, jigger it, stand up—will you?" and this done, the Bantam and Tickler came to the fore and gallantly saluted the bride. Captain Timber followed, but Beetles, not taking his bearings correctly by the foot, fell upon the clergyman, and knocked him against the wall.

"I should recommend you all," said the exasperated gentleman, "to go home and have a nap. If I had observed your state I would not have performed the ceremony."

"Say another word to me," said Chops, "and I'll run you in."

He dived into his pocket, but the Bantam put him beside his bride, who took his arm, and led him out, Chops muttering bitterly under his breath, and Beetles swollen to double his size with laughter.

Chops looked into the gallery, and saw that it was empty.

Instinctively he felt that the boys were outside, waiting to do him honor, and his heart sank within him.

CHAPTER XV,

THE CAPTAIN'S PLOT.

THE boys were indeed outside, and the appearance of Chops leaning on his bride, rather than she on him, was hailed with a joyful shout. A number of idlers, attracted by so many lads in sailors' costume, had also gathered together, and these, as they looked upon the happy bridegroom, broke out into a shout of delight.

"This," said Chops, hazily looking about him, "is a bitter mockery. 'You don't know the man that you are cheering of, or you wouldn't do it. I've got a 'oller 'art that wears a mask.'"

"Hadn't we better move on?" whispered the fair bride.

"All in good time, Mrs. Brown," said Chops.

"Mrs. Chops, if you please."

"Mrs. Brown Chops, if you like, but never Chops alone."

As the crowd was now rapidly increasing, Captain Timber bade Chops lead on, and he fell in just behind. The Tickler and Mr. Jones came next, and the Bantam, fearing that Beetles' progression would be too slow, again took him on his back.

Such an imposing procession could not fail to attract attention, and as Chops took a wrong turning, and got into the heart of the town before he knew where he was going, a most terrific following accumulated before the beach hove in sight.

The excitement was intense, and occasional bursts of cheering brought great numbers of peo-

ple to their doors and windows, marveling much as they looked upon the strange sight. In the end Chops began to feel that it was indeed an important day, and became more cheerful and communicative.

"Mrs. Brown Chops," he said, "as the thing is done, we must make the best of it. We will endeavor to live happy and contented."

"All depends upon you," said Mrs. Chops, calmly.

"But you know wot you've got to do," returned Chops—"love, honor and obey—they was the words. Don't forget 'em."

Mrs. Chops sniffed, and said nothing more just then, but ere the day was out her husband was fully aware how she interpreted those promises.

The wedding party returned to the *Heart of Oak*, all but the boys, who had leave to spend a few hours ashore, and they broke up into little parties, and wandered about the town.

On board the *Heart of Oak* a breakfast was spread, and two men from the confectioner's were there to wait. Captain Timber was a generous old fellow, and never did things by halves.

It was such a feast as Chops had never sat down to before, and in the consumption of delectables he half forgot the future which lay before him.

Captain Timber, in a neat speech, proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom, and Chops responded, taking advantage of the opportunity to impress upon his hearers that the law ought at all times to be obeyed, particularly by those who formed the domestic circle of the official.

"If it was the right thing for women to rule," he said, "they would, in the course of nature, have been in the force, but as they don't serve in an official capacity, it's their dooty to obey."

If he could have seen the eyes of Mrs. Chops as he spoke he would not have gone so far, but she was beside him, and as he looked aloft while making this impressive address, he saw nothing.

The slipping of Beetles from his chair to the deck, where he lay, singing something about "Bright-eyed Polly," indicated to Captain Timber that it was time to break up, and accordingly, he intimated that the breakfast was over.

All rose and left the table but Mr. Jones, who was gazing in a sentimental manner at the fragment of a pigeon pie, and shaking his head mournfully. Captain Timber regarded him scornfully.

"What's the matter with you, Jones?" he asked.

"Oh, Matilda!" groaned the tutor, "thou all-fair but faithless!"

"Why, dash it," cried the captain, "do you mean to say that you are spoons, too?"

"I love her fondly—madly!" said the tutor; "I am distracted!"

"Here," said Captain Timber, "have the gloves on, and I'll soon knock that nonsense out of you—a little exercise will do us both good."

"She used to wear lemon-colored kids on Sundays," groaned Mr. Jones. "Oh! what a lovely hand it was—almond-shaped and lily-white—oh, Matilda!"

"Here, let me help you up," said the Bantam. "You are worse than I thought. Now, then—take t'other end, Tickler. He's as limp as a rag."

They got him up, but he had lost the use of his legs, and nothing was left for them to do but carry him below. So they took him, feebly bewailing the falsity of Matilda.

Meanwhile, Chops led the way to the kitchen, and entered upon what he considered to be his private property from thenceforth. He did not trouble himself to lead his spouse thither, but left her to follow or not, just as she chose. It was just as well to let her know at once that he was not a man to be trifled with.

Arriving there, he loftily ordered Job and Jake out of the place, and as there was a fire burning, he planted a chair thereat, and sitting down, put a foot on either bob.

"This is comfort," he said. "Mrs. Brown-Chops, are you there?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Chops, quietly.

"Make me some tea with sugar and no milk," he said. "Let it be hot, strong, and good."

He took his hat off and tossed it upon the dresser, and thrust his fingers through his locks. Mrs. Chops stepped to a side table, took up something, and bore down upon him.

"Mr. Chops!" she said.

"Yes, ma'am," he returned, without deigning to look up.

"What did you ask for?"

"I asked for nothing," he replied; "I h'ordered some tea."

"You ordered!" she said, and raising her arm, she smote him on the head with the something

she had taken from the table. That something was a rolling-pin.

He scarcely realized what had happened, but springing to his feet with a yell, turned and faced her. She was calm and resolute, and he looked upon the future mistress of his life.

"Get out," she said, "and go and sit in that hole of a lock-up until I send for you."

"But my love, my angel," murmured Chops, "what was it for?"

"Do you think I am going to have a fellow like you come and sit in front of the fire, sticking your feet up as if you was Lord knows who?" said Mrs. Chops. "Get away to your lock-up, and wait there till I send for you."

"But, my love—"

She bore down upon him, and he fled. Who can wonder, for what is the majesty of the law to the fury of a woman? He took refuge in his lock-up, and so spent an hour of humiliation and shame, brooding over his unhappy lot.

He was aroused by the stumping of Beetles' crutches on the deck, and in due time that worthy fell against the door, as a sign that he wished to be admitted. Anybody was better than such lone misery, and Chops let him in.

The face of Beetles was inflamed more than ever, and his eyes stood almost out of his head. Chops knew what those signs meant, but he bade him come in and helped him to a seat.

"You've begun already," gasped Beetles. "I heard all about it. Jake told me."

"It don't matter what you've heard," replied Chops; "but let me tell you that we are all in for it."

"All in for it?"

"Yes, Beetles, for this morning I've been and done—a bit of bigamy."

"A bit of bigamy!" echoed Beetles.

"Just so," replied Chops, with the calmness of despair. "I've got a wife livin' somewheres—I runned away from her years ago."

"But I didn't know anything about that ere job, Chops."

"Oh, yes you did."

"No I didn't."

"Anyway, I'll swear it," replied Chops, "if it comes to a serious business—you and the captain are both in it."

"But wot's the good o' your swearin it!" asked Beetles, overcome.

"You'll see—I'll turn queen's evidence, and convict both of you—now then."

Beetles was aghast. He knew very little about the workings of the law, and he had great faith in Chops' knowledge of it. Bigamy, he knew, was a serious offense—a hanging matter, he was inclined to think—and he trembled on his wooden legs.

"I say, Chops," he said, "you ought to have told us this—it ain't fair."

"So long as you behaves well and don't come any cheek over me I'll let you alone," replied Chops, coolly, "but if you come a worrying me I'll turn queen's evidence against both of you, and you'll see wot comes out of it."

Beetles was humbled. He felt that he was in a trap, and he yielded to the snarer.

"Chops," he said, "nothin' is farder from my heart that to annoy you. I axes your pardon, old man."

"Granted," said Chops, affably. "Only mind, any cheek and I'm down on you."

"Massa Chops!" said Jake, outside, "missus say dat you are to come at once."

Chops arose, humble and submissive in his turn. Beetles got up and stumped forth, meditating.

"He was allus an artful one, that Chops," he muttered, "but I never thought he would get us into a mess like this. Bigamy—it's an 'orrible thing. If he splits there'll be some serus work for the judges. I wish I hadn't gone to the wedding. Hallo! here comes the boys. I'll cut it."

Several boat-loads of youngsters pulled up at the side, and the boys clambered on deck, shouting with laughter, and as merry as crickets. They pounced on the remnants of the feast—a very considerable amount of good things—and carried them below.

There Harry superintended its division into lots, one for each dormitory, and these, with the addition of certain things they had brought from the shore, made a very respectable feed for them.

In No. 1 dormitory the spread was truly magnificent. Half a dozen newspapers formed a table-cloth, and on it were half a pork pie, the best part of a ham, a score of little tarts, some bread, butter, cheese, and a bottle of currant and ginger wine.

They had footless wine-glasses enough, and Harry Fitzroy bade them fill up. He was going to propose a toast. As he raised his glass the

door opened, and Job and Jake came tumbling in.

"Oh, golly, here am a lark!" they both gasped. "Oh, such a bery 'musing game goin' on in de kitchen."

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"Missus just put de flour ober him," said Jake.

"No, de treacle," said Job.

"I tell you dat it was de flour fust."

"It was not. I swear it was de treacle!"

"You am a lie, Job!"

"You are anoder, Jake!"

And then they fell into each other's arms fighting, and rolled into a corner.

"It mattered little which way it was," said Harry. "At any rate Chops has been treacled and floured. Gentlemen, let us drink to his happiness, and then somebody separate those two niggers."

They drank, and Jimmy Bricks separated the combatants, and furnished them with a tart each. This pacified them, and they were good friends as ever.

"It am de biggest lark," said Job.

"Yes," said Jake, "but you forgot de oder ting."

"What ting?"

"De men dat come on board."

"Men on board!" cried Harry, springing up.

"What are they like? Jake, you answer; and Job, you keep quiet, or I'll knock your head off."

"Sailors, massa," said Jake.

"Some ob dem," muttered Job, under his breath.

"How many?"

"Hundreds," said Jake.

"Thousands," muttered Job.

"What is the meaning of it?" said Harry. "Is

this the captain's plan to circumvent us? Keep quiet, I'll go and reconnoiter."

He was absent only a few seconds, and he came back with his hat on the back of his head, and his hands in his pockets, softly whistling.

"My lads," he said, "sore times are coming on us."

"Who are they?" asked Gerard Warren.

"I don't know."

"Haven't you seen them? haven't you been on deck?"

"No, my lads, I have not—we are battened down."

A general exclamation of dismay followed this announcement, and a dead silence followed, the boys looking at each other.

"What's in the wind?" said Harry, after a long pause. "I don't know, but all these men have come on board for something, and we are not battened down for nothing. Hush! there's a steady tramp."

"I hear the creaking of chains."

"Open that port-hole," said Harry, "and I'll get outside. I am going to see what is up, if I can."

The port-hole was opened, and in a moment he saw what was going on. They were raising one of the anchors.

"I see his game now," cried Harry. "He is going to carry us out to sea, to some lone island, perhaps. But who cares?"

"Think of the men," said Gerard. "How many men, Job?"

"Hundreds," said Jake.

"Thousands," insisted Job.

"Put it down at a hundred," said Harry, "and we will be near enough."

"Now then, my lads, heave ahead," roared the captain from aloft. "Double grog if she is out of the Solent before nightfall."

"Ay—ay, sir!" chorused a body of men, and a fiddle striking up, they went around at an increased speed.

"This has taken me aback," said Harry. "I wonder if the other fellows know it. Blow the trumpet, Jimmy, and call a general meeting."

Bricks doubled his fist, and blew a powerful music blast, which brought the whole school together, and the news was scattered amongst them.

"Battened down." "Going out to sea." It was terrible tidings to many there; and poor Jerry Snivel, who never could control his tears, burst out a-crying, and said something about writing to his mother.

"I don't think it matters much," said Harry. "But it's against the agreement to take us from England, and if we get a chance we shall be quite justified in running away. I, for one, should not mind a few years on an island."

"We might found a boy colony," said Jimmy Bricks.

"A boy's grandmother," said David Crusher. "It's not a pleasant thing to be taken off in this way. He hasn't a right to do it."

"But it's done," said Harry, "and we must make the best of it."

"Here we go," cried Ned Bowling. "Hear the water rushing."

"Look at the shore gliding by."

"It's as good a lark as any," cried Harry.

"At sea or by the shore we will be as merry as we can; so, boys, give a cheer for the School now really on the Sea."

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